MARIGOLD

Edith Francis Foster

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MARIGOLD

"MARIGOLD HAD STOPPED DANCING."

MARIGOLD

By EDITH FRANCIS FOSTER

Author of "Mary 'n' Mary," "Jimmy Crow," "Puss in the Corner," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

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To the humble voyagers

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MARIGOLD

CHAPTER I.

"MARI-GOLD! If you don't stop dancing — on this rope — you'll duck me, and I'll be drow-*owned!*" gasped Mary, breathless, but still laughing pluckily.

"No, you won't," Marigold called back, laughing too. "You will just turn into a mermaid, with a long fish-tail to swim with, and nice shiny little fins for fingers; and then you can swim right straight across to Spain, and never get tired at all! Wouldn't that be nice?"

But she had stopped "dancing" nevertheless, and while she talked she was coming back very carefully, hand over hand along the guard-

rope, to where Mary clung, resting after her swim.

Not for the world would she annoy or frighten Mary in the water. She had no wish either to drown her beloved "twin" or to make a mermaid of her.

Never were two own sisters who loved each other better than did these adoptive twins, as the pair still persisted in calling themselves; and it was very seldom indeed Marigold forgot for a moment that she was just a little the stronger of the two, and must be careful and considerate of her precious Mary.

It was in their daily morning surf-bath that her stronger arms and deeper chest counted for most. Why, she could swim from the Square Rock right back to the bath-house steps without stopping, — so you can see she was a pretty good swimmer for a girl of eleven.

Mary swam out to the rock and back every morning, too (for she always went everywhere

and did everything Marigold did), but she had to stop once or twice to rest, holding by the rope which Papa Merington had had stretched and fastened securely between the bath-house platform and the rock when they first came to the seashore. He was not going to risk losing any of his twins, he said; he hadn't a twin too many.

Besides the rope there was Andrews, the coachman. While the little girls swam and splashed and frolicked in the splendid cold salt water like a pair of "water-babies," Andrews was always sitting on one particular rock by the bath-house, quietly smoking his pipe. He looked very peaceful and idle; but if you had seen the watchful eyes under his shading hat-brim you would have felt as sure as Papa Merington did that the twins were quite as safe as real water-babies could possibly have been.

And besides Andrews there was mamma. In her own private mind mamma was a little afraid of water and boats; and though she trusted fully

both in Andrews's faithfulness and the children's obedience, still, like most mothers, she felt just a little more comfortable when they were in her sight. So, as she also enjoyed seeing the fun of the water frolic, she usually came down with them, and sat on the rocks, ready to answer their jubilant shouts, and to receive and admire the wet, slippery treasures that were constantly brought to her lap.

To-day, however, callers or something had kept her in the house, and the children were having their bath by themselves.

Before Marigold had quite reached her side, Mary sprang away, hand over hand along the rope, and made as fast as she could for the Square Rock, shouting back a gleeful challenge: "You can't catch *me!*"

It was one of their favorite games, this way of racing, and Mary's agility often made her a match for Marigold's greater strength and endurance. She reached the rock just barely ahead of her

pursuer, scrambled up on it, panting, and rolled herself out of reach of being tagged.

Marigold was close behind her, though, and in a moment they were sitting side by side in the sun, clasping their arms around their knees and looking quite like a pair of very small and young mermaids themselves, while they busily discussed the nature and habits of those fishy folk.

It was their pet play, and they called it "s'posing."

S'pose you were a mermaid, which should you like best — to play down there in the deep shady places, where the crimson and amber and gold-brown seaweeds grow, hunting for pearls — and starfish — and all the lovely things; or to stay up on top in the sunshine, and let the little waves dance you up and down?

They each chose differently, as they usually did. Mary would play in the sunshine among the foaming wave-crests, while Marigold longed

to explore the green and golden depths she was always peering into from the rocks.

But on one point they were both perfectly agreed: that combing your hair with a golden comb, the way mermaids do in poetry, would be a very stupid way of spending time, and that they would waste as little on it as possible — just enough to be tidy, of course, but no more.

S'pose you really *were* a mermaid, and could wear all the bracelets and necklaces and things you liked, which would you rather have, strings of amber or coral or pearl?

This was a difficult choice; so difficult that they finally decided to allow two apiece, and Mary took the corals and pearls, and Marigold pearls and amber, — which was perfectly satisfactory to both.

Then it was Marigold's turn to s'pose again; but at that moment Andrews, sitting on his rock by the bath-house, snapped the cover of his big silver watch, knocked the coals out of his pipe,

and whistled a long, fluting call out across the rollers to the Square Rock, to tell the children their bath was done and it was time to come ashore.

They came, after their own fashion, — first swimming a bit, then hanging from the guard-rope to let the rollers lift and swing them, and when their feet touched the sand jumping over each wave as it passed.

At last they dashed up through the shoaling water, scattering a storm of glittering drops before them, in a wild race for the bath-house steps — and Andrews beat a hasty retreat to a higher and dryer spot.

Next came another race, to get warm, the length of the pretty little crescent-shaped beach, shut in at either end by the cliffs.

Their eclipse in the bath-house was a short one; for time spent indoors was time thrown away, when the sun was shining and the breezes blowing as they shone and blew this morning.

Very soon indeed the little girls were out again, fully dressed, and sitting in a sun-warmed nook in the rocks, pouring the warm sand over hands and feet, when the white dress and sun-shade that always meant mamma came in sight on the cliff-path above them.

Then there was an eager rush to meet her, — to show her the starfish with only four legs (or were they arms, mamma, which?) and the very pinkest Irish moss you ever saw; and to consult her, both at once, as to whether mermaids, if there were any mermaids, would really have fins for fingers, or just real fingers with little shiny webs in between.

Mamma considered the important question carefully. She rather inclined to the opinion that it would be webs, like a frog; because frogs can swim so nicely and still can use their hands for other things besides.

By this time they had reached the sunny nook again, where the warm yellow sand ran up like

waves among the rocks at the foot of the cliff; and the children fell to digging again, while mamma, comfortably ensconced under her sunshade, began to read the handful of letters she had brought down with her.

One by one they were cut, unfolded, read in silence, and laid aside; but presently, "Why, children," exclaimed mamma, "here is news for Mary 'n' Mary!

"This is from Aunt Adelaide, and she says they have decided to go to England, after all — she and the children — for three months. So they have let the country house and, if we like, they can come to us for a few weeks before they sail. We do like, don't we, chickens?"

Mary was delighted. Cousins' visits were always a wonderful event, for Aunt Adelaide lived in New York, so the children did not often see one another. Since the birthday party last summer in Berket, when the twins, Elinor and Elizabeth, and their brother Rodney first made the

acquaintance of Mary Murray and her bossy, there had been only one short visit, at Christmas time; and then the little New Yorkers had hardly had time to get used to the fact that Mary Murray was now Mary Golden Merington (Marigold for short), and "really-truly-twin" to the original Mary Merington.

They all liked Marigold — who could help it? — but naturally they loved Mary best, while Marigold, on her side, felt hardly at home with them yet, and found it hard to realize that they were now *her* cousins as well as Mary's.

However, anything that gave Mary pleasure pleased her also; and then, every child likes to have things happen, no matter what. So Mary 'n' Mary joyfully abandoned their sand-piles and began to make a hundred delightful plans for the entertainment of their guests.

Every hour of the visit was quickly filled two or three times over in advance, in their joyous chatter of picnics and drives, pine woods and rocky

pastures, the cliffs and the bathing-beach — for the house the Merington family had taken for the summer stood in one of the loveliest places on the New England coast, with both sand beach and cliffs before it, and endless woods and hills and country roads behind; so the children's only difficulty was to choose in which of all the beautiful places to spend their days.

They were still busy with the pleasant problem as they escorted mamma up the steep cliff-path; and mamma listened and laughed with them, putting in a suggestion now and then, but let them plan it all as they liked, only ready to lend her help when needed.

Children know best what children like, she thought; and it pleased her to hear them carefully considering Elinor's special tastes and Rodney's possible preferences.

They did not seem to need much help, so far.

CHAPTER II.

THEY returned again to the absorbing topic that afternoon, as they followed the narrow path winding among the bayberry clumps and low, ragged cedars of the shore-pastures, on their way to the Cove.

It would certainly have been a shorter walk for them to go by the road; but why shorten it, when they loved every warm, spicy breath of the bayberries, and every cold, salty puff of breeze from the blue afternoon sea, where the white gulls wheeled and flashed? Each step was a pleasure; so the more steps the better.

"Yes, we can take them this way when we go to the post-office," Marigold was saying. "I am so glad they never were here before, so we

can show them everything new. Won't they love it all!"

"Yes," said Mary, "they must love it, it is so beautiful everywhere. At least Elinor and Elizabeth will. I s'pose they'll like it better than Rod."

"But why shouldn't he?" asked Marigold, surprised. "I should think this was just a splendid place for a boy, there are so many things to do."

"Well — but —" Mary was trying to think it out while she spoke: her idea was rather indefinite.

"I don't believe boys like just the *doing* things so much as they like doing them with the other boys.

"Rod will have us girls to take walks with or go in bathing, but that isn't the same thing. He'd rather have some one as big and strong as he is himself, who could do just as much, to make it real fun for him.

"Now girls like doing things anyway, if they are pleasant things. If one of us were here all alone, without the other one" ("without the other one" *was* "all alone" to Mary 'n' Mary), "she could have pretty good times just playing around in these lovely places — finding cosy little cubby-holes to sit in and read, and look at the water, and finding pretty things to carry home, and making playhouses. Why, you could be having fun every minute!

"But I don't think boys are like that; and there are no boys as big as Rod nearer than the village — unless maybe at the new hotel."

"No — nobody he'd care to play with," Marigold assented, soberly.

Her own experience of the boys in McGowan's Lane convinced her that Mary's instinct was right, — but she was a little sorry.

Privately, Marigold liked Rodney best of all the New York family of Meringtons. He was more like herself, plain and simple. He didn't

talk about clothes, and dancing-school, and parties, and all sorts of things which she cared little about.

Rod didn't talk much anyway, but he seemed to like very much the same kind of outdoor things that she did; and Marigold gave a small sigh as she wondered why he could not do those things with *her* just as well as with the missing "other boy."

They had come down from the high sea-pastures now, crossed the rickety "Old Bridge," over the mouth of the little tide-river, and were following the shore-road, made by the fish carts, around to the cove village where all the fishermen's houses were.

Their errand was to one of these, — a message about some work from mamma to Mrs. Starrett, — Mrs. Amos Starrett, not the other one, — which of course Andrews could have taken just as well, but that the children were always glad of any reason for taking that walk.

Marigold, indeed, had a special reason for liking it, apart from the beauty of the shore-path; for the row of straggling, untidy cottages, with their broken fences and fluttering clothes-lines, and the perpetual crowd of dirty, jolly youngsters about them, were very much like McGowan's Lane; and until just ten months ago, you know, McGowan's Lane had been *home* to Marigold.

You could not say, exactly, that she was home-sick, or that she would have wished to go back and be Mary Murray again. She loved her new home, and loved Papa and Mamma Merington and Mary too dearly for that; and yet, to go to the Cove, and to fancy herself for a little while in the old familiar places, gave her an odd little painful pleasure that she had never tried to express, even to her other half, Mary Merington. It was the kind of thing that Marigold did not talk about, — things that made her feel bad.

For the same reason she had said nothing of her disappointment, when it had been decided to spend this first summer of her Merington life at the seashore instead of returning to South Berket, where she had been Mary Murray.

Between ourselves, I suspect that she herself was one of the reasons which had decided the change of plan.

I think Papa and Mamma Merington felt it would be wise to keep her away from the old places and associations until she had grown quite used to being Marigold Merington. To be so near her old home and yet separated from it might make her unsettled if not unhappy; while here at the shore everything was new and interesting, and kept her thoughts away from herself.

Still, mamma's loving watchfulness had not failed to note the occasional shadow on Marigold's frank and honest little face; and many a pleasant little plan, — a game, a story, an unexpected outing, — whose purpose the children

never suspected, had chased away that shadow and brought back Marigold's own bright look of interest and pleasure.

If the shadow could have been banished for good and all, so soon as this, Marigold would not have been the loyal, loving child she was; but she was also a buoyant, cheerful little person, and the disappointment had not wholly destroyed her anticipations of the first visit to the old home. It would come sometime, if not just yet.

Often she fell asleep at night in the middle of a pleasant vision of running up the familiar path to the back door and bursting into Mother Murray's clean-scrubbed, soapy-smelling little kitchen without any warning, astonishing them all.

She would bring presents for them all, of course, — and what wonderful stories she would have to tell the boys, and all the children in the lane!

In these plans twin Mary shared with affectionate sympathy, and her advice and suggestions in respect to the choice of presents were most helpful. They had written and revised the list many times, and as it stood at present it promised to empty both little purses, and both the gilded iron banks as well.

So, little by little, Marigold was learning to think of McGowan's Lane without a tug at her heart; and until the time should come for the hoped-for visit she could cheerfully make an occasional errand to Mrs. Amos Starrett at the Cove do instead.

There were a lot of children in the Starrett house, — as many as there used to be in the Donovan and Ready houses at home, — and they were of all sizes, from about the age of Mary and Marigold down to almost no size at all.

Really, I couldn't say, without counting, just how many there were.

They were scattered all about the place as the

little girls came up. Jennie, the oldest girl, was sitting idly on the door-step, doing nothing at all, her elbows on her knees.

Inside the house one of the no-size ones was crying dismally, in a tired, monotonous wail, as if he had been crying for a long time; and the mother's voice was tired and fretful, too, as she called to Jennie to "For mercy's sake come and take this child so's't I can get these dishes washed sometime to-day!"

But Jennie made no move to obey. "In a minute," she drawled, in a reluctant, grudging tone, and then bent down to tie up her dangling boot-laces, apparently for the sole purpose of putting off the disagreeable duty as long as she could.

Mary Merington's soft gray eyes opened wide in grave surprise. Never in her sweet little life had she failed to respond with quick and willing obedience to her mother's call.

Marigold's record was probably not so per-

fect, but her disapproval was quite as strong as Mary's, though it arose from a different source — the little-mother instinct which had been fostered by her care for her baby stepbrother, little Joe.

The look her brown eyes flashed at the lazy figure on the steps made Jennie wriggle uneasily, as Marigold stepped quickly past her into the hot frowzy kitchen.

"Oh, please may I take him, Mrs. Starrett? — Excuse me, good afternoon! — May I hold him if he will come to me? Come to Marigold, baby. There, there, now him's all right, isn't him?"

Mrs. Starrett looked on in mild surprise. The little girl in the fine frock had her baby right end up and right side to, quite as though she understood the art of baby-tending as well as Mrs. Starrett herself; and the poor, tired little fellow hushed his wailing to stare at his new nurse.

By the time he had decided there was nothing

to object to in her appearance he had forgotten to cry, and he began to fix his attention on the mass of lustrous copper-brown curls that tumbled over her shoulders. Presently a feeble, fumbling little hand was stretched out to grasp at them. Next appeared an uncertain, toothless smile, and the baby was won.

Marigold cooed and chirped at him, and shook him up and smoothed him down again, giving her whole heart to the joy of hugging a baby once more; while Mary delivered her mother's message to Mrs. Starrett.

The poor woman was glad enough to get the chance to earn an extra dollar (in fact that was one reason Mamma Merington tried so hard to find occasions for hiring extra help), but it was doubtful if she heard more than half the message, she was so pleased and relieved by Marigold's success in soothing the ailing child.

"Well, ain't it a wonder how he takes to you!" she said. "Yes, tell your mother I'll come, and

be glad to, any time. He generally screams at the sight of a stranger. I guess you like babies, don't you?"

"Oh, *yes*, ma'am!" Marigold answered, with such heartfelt fervor, and such an enthusiastic squeeze of the grimy little bundle she held, that Mary looked at her with astonishment.

It was no wonder Mary had nearly forgotten Baby Joe. She had played with him, to be sure, through many summer afternoons at South Berket, but she had not gone through his teething with him, and tended him by day and night, as little-mother Marigold had done.

The other little Starretts had left their play, of course, at sight of the visitors, and were peeping in at door and window, ready to dodge, with bashful grins, if one looked their way. Jennie had come in, and lounged against the door, staring in wonder at the girl who loved babies.

Mary was doing her gentle best to make acquaintance with them all, but they were too shy

of her to get on very fast — she was too different; they had never been so near to real "summer folks" before.

You could not have guessed from their stolid, almost stupid, looks that they were drinking in all the prettiness and daintiness of her with real delight; but they were, — though they would say little but "yes" and "no."

As for Marigold, she was still too indignant with the undutiful Jennie to have anything to say to *her*, but she couldn't help being bright and friendly with the rest; she was always a sociable little soul.

But when she rose to go, she dumped the baby in the most matter-of-course way into Jennie's arms, without interrupting herself in what she was saying to their mother. And Jennie and the baby, recognizing a master spirit, both submitted without a murmur to the transfer.

Well out on the shore-road, beyond hearing, Marigold very emphatically expressed her opin-

ion of a great girl like that who would let a baby cry himself into fits before she'd stir!

Mary agreed, in her milder way.

It might have softened their judgment a little if they had known that at that moment lazy Jennie was sitting in the chair Marigold had left, trying to shake her tangled, sunburnt locks at the baby as she had seen Marigold shake her curls.

The baby was not wholly satisfied, but he consented to accept the substitute, and there was unusual peace in the frowzy kitchen, while the mother got the dishes washed at last.

The visit of Mary and Marigold was a wonderful event to all the Starrett children, and two more of them came in — one through the door and the other through the window — to talk it over.

"Wasn't the one with the long curls just lovely!" said Beulah. "She looks just like the fairy princess in my library book."

"No, sir, Marigold's the handsomest!" Jennie declared, jealously. "*She* looks — well, like a queen, that ain't grown up yet!"

CHAPTER III.

THEY came, the cousins and Aunt Adelaide, on the morning train, drove two miles from the nearest railway station, and were met at the steps of the big, rambling "cottage" on the cliffs by dear Mamma Merington and "Mary 'n' Mary," these last two fairly dancing in the eagerness of their welcome.

The good times began on the instant. The younger visitors were hardly allowed to enter the house before they were escorted out across lawn and pasture and granite ledges to the brink of the cliffs, and thence down the steep zigzag path to the little half-moon beach.

An hour later they were gathered up by a reproachful maid and hurried home, late to lunch,

with wet shoes and frocks, and hands filled with treasure of seaweed, shells, and pebbles.

As soon as luncheon was over they were off again, — this time on a regular expedition, with baskets, to Ship Head, which thrust out its splendid heights into the ocean about half a mile away to the north.

Still farther out, beyond its last sheer face, ran a wilderness of mingled boulders and ledges, heaped and tumbled in a delightful chaos. When the tide was high they were nearly all covered; but from low to half tide there were acres of the most fascinating play-places you ever dreamed of, — clear, deep pools, where crabs and squids and starfish lurked waiting for the next tide to set them free; lovely under-water gardens of the olive and amber and golden seaweed; warm, smooth slopes of ledge where you could lie flat in the sunshine, peeping over the edge to watch the white foam swirling back and forth below.

Oh, the joys of Ship Head were inexhaustible, and if the children had spent all their days there for a year I doubt if they would have wearied of the place.

The little baskets were an indispensable part of an expedition like this. Long before the happy, tired party returned, they had been emptied of sandwiches and cookies and filled to overflowing with the usual collections of what the children called "treasures," and the long-suffering maids at home, "rubbish."

After dinner they were obliged to content themselves on the piazza; for the two mothers decreed that there had been enough fatigue and excitement for one day.

The four girls were snuggled together in a bunch among the cushions of a big rattan settee. Rodney was sitting astride the hammock, inventing new ways of falling out of it. They were all in that comfortable stage of tiredness when one is not yet quite ready for bed, and talking quietly,

by fits and starts, of what they were going to do on the morrow.

Presently Rod leaned back and stretched his arms above his head luxuriously (at the imminent risk of inventing a new way of breaking his neck).

"My, but this is a jolly place!" he said. "Lots better than where we were last year. I wish we were going to stay here all summer."

Mary and Marigold beamed at him, highly gratified; but Elinor spoke quickly, in her "Aunt Adelaide" tone of voice.

"Why, Rodney! Don't you *want* to go to see Cousin Alan and all the rest?"

"Well, I'm not so awfully keen on it, don't you know," drawled Young America, unabashed; and his sisters' giggles acknowledged his mimicry was good, even while their shocked "Rod — hush!" rose in unison.

"Well, I ain't!" he insisted, dropping back into the American language. "I've been over

there once, and I don't remember that I had such a tremendously good time. I think it would be more fun here."

Mary and Marigold exchanged a quick look of surprise and pleasure. Perhaps Mary had been wrong about boys.

"If only there were a few other fellows around here—" he added, reflectively; and the little girls exchanged another smile,—a rueful one, this time. Apparently Mary had been right about boys, after all.

In the days that followed, however, Rod did not seem to feel the lack of "other fellows" very much. He climbed Round Hill, and explored the pine woods and the sea-pastures with the girls, and borrowed Hosea Starrett's punt to paddle himself around the cove, and in general seemed to enjoy "doing things" fully as much as his sisters and cousins did. So perhaps Mary was wrong about boys,—the children hoped again.

And yet before the end of a week, by means of that mysterious freemasonry of the boy-world, which no one but a boy can understand, Rod had contrived to pick up an acquaintance with more "fellows" than the girls had supposed were in the place, — boys of his own age, and some that were considerably older, from the summer cottages scattered along the shore and the hotels on Long Beach.

Perhaps these acquaintances began at the post-office. That was where everybody met everybody, and Rod had promptly assumed the duties of postman, making two trips to the village daily on a rented bicycle; for this was such a delightfully quiet place there was not even a "rural" mail-carrier yet, despite all the cottages and summer boarders.

Not that these complained — on the contrary, "going to the mail" was, as it is apt to be in such places, the pleasantest and most important social event of the day.

The morning mail was not so important, but at five o'clock, when the stage came back from the depot, bringing the mail-bags, and the new arrivals, you could be sure of meeting almost any one you wished to see, sauntering down the shady street, or standing chatting in groups in the grocery store, which was also, of course, the post-office. And while you waited for the mail to be sorted you could explore the show-case for hairpins, or ribbon, or sewing-silk, or buy little gay-striped bags of the delightful old-fashioned candy one never finds at home nowadays.

The little girls liked this errand, too; and occasionally they met Rodney there, and all walked home together around by the shore-path.

When he was engaged with those other boys, and paid no attention to them, Mary and Marigold would feel a little slighted, but his sisters took it very easily. Rod's society was not an entertaining novelty to them, and they accepted or did without it with equal coolness.

But even Elinor and Elizabeth were displeased the day they planned a picnic up Bourne's Brook, and found at the last minute that Rodney was engaged for some expedition with a set of boys he was getting very intimate with, at the big new hotel.

It was disappointing to them all to go without him; but they did, and enjoyed their scrambling explorations up the riotous little brook through the rocky woods.

And they had their revenge when, at night, they met the late-returning deserter with the exciting news that they had seen a *mink!* — a real, live mink, — they met Mr. Bourne, and told him, and he said it was, — among the rocks of the upper stream; and had traced his foot-prints on the bank, and "almost found his hole, just think!" as Mary earnestly assured him.

Rodney was disgusted. It is not every day — or every summer — a fellow has the luck to

see a mink: it would really have been something to brag about at school; and it did seem hard that such a chance should have fallen to just girls!

Still, he had had a pretty good time himself that day, out sailing with Renshaw and Cheney and the rest. Rod loved the water, — as what boy does not? — and his only chance for sailing was by such invitations, for there was no boat on the little half-moon beach which belonged to the Merington's cottage.

Rod understood in a general way that this was because Aunt May didn't like boats — she was "nervous" about them; but he saw no reason why that fact should interfere with his enjoyment, since *he* certainly was not nervous; and no one had said anything to him about not going out.

So it gradually came about that a good share of his time was spent either in the fishermen's dories or in Renshaw's little yacht, in which that

young gentleman amused himself by taking an amateur's crazy risks.

Rodney himself knew more about a sailboat than Renshaw seemed to; perhaps that was one reason why those older fellows liked to have the younger boy with them so often.

However, the next time a family excursion was planned Rod showed no intention of being counted out. Maybe he thought the perverse luck which had bestowed a mink upon just girls would produce a sea-serpent for their benefit this time — for the picnic was to be a grand clambake up at North Beach, where there were no hotels or cottages, and you could have all the fun you liked without any one to see.

There were just two carriages full; for they had waited till papa could run up from the city for a short holiday. It happened to be an unusually busy summer for him, and he could not spare much time away from his business.

North Beach was lovely and lonely as ever,

"DIGGING THEIR DINNERS OUT OF THE SAND."

and the falling tide had just uncovered the level, ripple-marked sand of the clam-flats below the slope of the beach.

In a moment the children's shoes were off, and then how all the bare feet twinkled in a grand race up the beach and back before the serious business of the clam-digging began.

That was the young folk's business. Papa had announced at the outset that he was "company" and mustn't do any work. So he established himself very comfortably on the dry sand under mamma's umbrella, and amused himself by watching the antics of the diggers; for the little New Yorkers, whose only experiences of shore life had been at a big hotel, were finding the process of digging their own dinners out of the earth equally new and exciting.

Elinor screamed regularly each time the clam she was pursuing sent up a sudden jet of clear sea-water through the sand like a tiny fountain; and Elizabeth, who had chosen to help Rod,

bothered him dreadfully by insisting on plunging both hands into the hole, as soon as she heard his hoe scrape the shell, and carefully extracting the clam by twisting and pulling, so as not to break it.

Thus handicapped, Rod was getting badly beaten by Andrews, whom he was racing to fill his basket first, and he naturally failed to see the superiority which Elizabeth pointed out in hand-picked clams.

When his patience was at an end he would chase her a little way up the beach with his hoe, generally returning only a few inches ahead of his persistent assistant.

Mary and Marigold were, as usual, in partnership, digging quietly and busily side by side, their clams piled in a single heap between them. The heap grew steadily but not very fast, for their tools were only the big empty sea-clam shells, thrown up on the beach by last winter's storms.

So if Andrews had not worked faster than the girls and more steadily than the boy, dinner would have been considerably later than would have suited hungry picnickers.

But clams were not the whole of it — bless you, no indeed! This picnic was of the sort that "grown-ups" like, — comfortable as well as festive.

Mamma Merington had planned it to please papa and Aunt Adelaide, rather than the young gipsies, who would have been pleased with anything or everything, so only it were eaten out-of-doors.

So there were comfortable seats and cushions, and umbrellas for shade and books for amusement, and a beautiful luncheon, with plates and knives and forks, and so many nice things to eat with no sand in them, that it would hardly have mattered if the clams had been left out altogether.

Aunt Adelaide *was* pleased. She declared it was the best picnic she had ever had, and as they

all sat or lay in the warm, sunny sand after dinner she was in such a serene, indulgent humor that it seemed to Rodney a good opportunity to broach a plan which he had been thinking over for several days.

CHAPTER IV.

Rod's plan took them all by surprise, and half of them were pleased, and half were not; for it was simply that his mother and sisters should go to England without him, leaving him to finish the summer here, where he was enjoying himself so well, in charge of Mamma Merington.

His mother and sisters were the not-pleased ones. Elinor and Elizabeth naturally thought it too bad of him to desert them in this abrupt fashion; while Aunt Adelaide, like many people when they are taken by surprise, began at once to think of all the objections to the idea.

But Rodney was prepared for that, — he had thought of most of them himself beforehand, and had his answers ready.

He met the argument that it would bother his

Aunt May by appealing directly to that lady herself, with his most wheedling smile (and Rod could be very wheedling when he chose).

His aunt laughed at his blandishments, but she patted the curly head on the rug beside her very affectionately as she assured Aunt Adelaide that it was true she was not much used to boys, but this would be a splendid opportunity to get used to one.

His passage was already taken with the others — but they could easily wire and give it up.

The English relatives of Aunt Adelaide whom they were to visit would not be apt to miss him very much, for it happened there were no cousins very near his age.

But his strongest argument, and the one to which his mother finally yielded, was that if he stayed, he would be ready to go into school when it opened, without losing half the first term, — as would be necessary if he went abroad, — and this would please his father.

Aunt Adelaide had to admit that he was probably right as to this. His father had objected to his losing so much time, while on the other hand she did not wish to come home so early in the fall as would be needful to prevent it.

Rodney's proposal would certainly settle that difficulty; and after a little more discussion she consented that he should write to his father for permission to stay.

Mary and Marigold had had little to say during the discussion; but they had telegraphed a great deal to each other, with joyful smiles and triumphant nods. At last here was solid proof that Mary was wrong about boys — and Mary was quite as pleased as Marigold, to be proved wrong.

There was never a bit of the "I told you so" feeling in her gentle little heart.

And really, just think! To have a boy,— and a nice big one, too, — in the house all summer, — wouldn't it make life seem more interesting to *you* — if you were not much used to boys?

And Marigold was pleased because she *was* used to boys, and rather missed having them about. Also, she liked this one.

So, when at the end of the talk Rodney sat up to shake the sand out of his hair, he met two pretty pairs of childish eyes resting on him with a sparkle of delight in them which surprised him. He had made his plans without giving much thought to the little cousins; and he certainly had not expected any one would be so very glad to have him stay.

It pleased and touched him, too, that the twin Marys (as they were still often called) should look so happy about it; and his way of saying so was by a certain queer little quirk at one corner of his mouth, which was not quite a smile, but brought out the dimple just below it of which he was so ashamed.

That little quirk meant a good deal, when you knew Rod well enough to understand it.

Mary and Marigold accepted it as a promise

of friendly comradeship, and of good times to come. All their pleasant planning began anew, for all sorts of splendid doings seemed possible with Rod there to help.

They could go up the mountain — a trip long planned and as long postponed. They could engineer that new, and vastly superior, route down the cliff, in which Andrews refused to take any interest, on the double grounds that the present path was good enough, and that there was no use in lugging rocks where there was more'n enough rock already.

They couldn't help letting some of these fine ideas bubble over now, and there was more or less talk about them during the drive home.

Naturally, Rodney took more interest than his sisters, and Mary and Marigold were careful to keep their jubilations within bounds, in consideration for the sisters' feelings; but in fact Elinor and Elizabeth felt their loss much less than the others did their gain.

They were not bad sisters; they were fond of Rod, and were vexed and sorry that he was not going with them; but they were so used to him — it couldn't matter so much to them as to Mary and Marigold. Besides, they had long ago learned that the first duty of sisters is to let a fellow alone and not bother.

When the party reached home they found some one awaiting them, — a little figure that rose from the piazza steps and stood bashfully digging her toe into the gravel, with a funny mixture of shyness and boldness.

It was Jennie Starrett. She had brought a message from her mother, and finding the family away, had declined to give it to the servants, but insisted on waiting for Mrs. Merington to return. And there she had been sitting, silent and determined, on the steps, for the last half-hour.

Her secret hope was to catch a glimpse, however brief or distant, of Mary and Marigold. If by good luck she should both see and speak to

them, it would be a bright day for Jennie — and a fine story to take home to Beulah and Lottie!

And the good luck really did happen — her wishes all came true, and more; for as soon as the children recognized her they both came to meet her with cordial friendliness, and not only introduced her to their mother, but to the other strange children also — even presented her proudly, as the girl who rowed all the way from the Cove around to the village, and who knew how to sail a dory. (Her domestic qualities were not mentioned.)

Jennie was somewhat embarrassed by so much attention, and the boldness was quite lost in the bashfulness. She would hardly speak at all, until mamma came to the rescue and gently drew her out of the chattering circle.

Then she managed to tell her errand, — that her mother could not come to work to-morrow, as promised, because the baby was sick.

The mention of the baby brought Marigold

over to them, interested and anxious, all the "little mother" in her uppermost. How sick was he? What was the matter? Poor, dear little fellow, how too bad!

Like many other people in the world, Jennie was overwhelmed by the fulfilment of her wishes, and her only anxiety now was to get away. But Mamma Merington's kindness and the charm of her voice and smile helped her out, and when mamma had promised to send some nice things to-morrow that would be good for the baby, and Marigold had walked with her to the gate, her spirits were quite high again, and she hurried home triumphant, to tell her tale to the admiring and envious little sisters.

But Marigold returned slowly from the gate, deep in thought.

It was not alone her interest in the baby that had made her wish to show Jennie all the kindness possible. It was partly a feeling of championship, — for she perceived that the New York

cousins took little interest in the Starretts' misfortunes, — and partly also a dim confused sense that she herself owed something to Jennie.

"She is just the same as I was a year ago," she was thinking as she came slowly back to the house. "Jennie is just like Mary Murray. But now *I* am so happy, — I have all these beautiful things, and they all love me so, — and *she* hasn't anything more or different from what she has always had. I've got more than my share, and I ought to make it up to Jennie somehow, for it isn't fair!"

Marigold was not quite fair to herself in this. Mary Murray was *not* just like Jennie Starrett, and it was just because she was not that her happiness had come to her.

The little house and the big family, the poor clothes and the plain living had been very much the same; but it was the different quality in Mary Murray herself which had made the Meringtons love her, and wish to have her for their

own, even before they learned who she really was.

But, clear-headed as she was in general, Marigold did not see this.

When she rejoined the other children on the piazza, she found them still absorbed in Rodney's change of plans, Elinor and Elizabeth grumbling at his choice, and Mary divided between her impulse to rejoice at his preference, and her care not to hurt the twins' feelings.

It was hardly to be wondered at if Rodney rather enjoyed feeling himself the centre of interest, and was inclined to prolong his agreeable sense of importance by teasing his sisters and laughing, gently and affectionately, at Mary's quandary.

He did not notice that Marigold was a little quiet, for her, and had less to say than usual. But presently, after a little pause, in which her eyes had been bent thoughtfully on the rug at her feet, she raised her head with the air of being

struck by a sudden thought, and he turned toward her, expectantly.

"Only s'pose it should be the measles, — or the whooping-cough!" said Marigold.

You can't blame Rod for feeling disgusted. His self-complacence was badly damaged, and it was not easy to recover at once. Girls *are* queer!

What was worse, the others also forgot him and his affairs instantly, for this aspect of the baby's illness had a direct personal interest for them; and Marigold could no longer feel that Elinor and Elizabeth showed too little concern for the Starretts and their affairs. Had not the baby's sister been right among *them*, talking with *them?*

They rushed to the mothers, with anxious questions as to whether the baby could possibly have anything catching. The chance of having to put off their journey, or of being quarantined on shipboard, was not pleasant, and already they felt indignant with the whole Starrett family.

Mamma soon reassured them, and soothed their ruffled minds. There was nothing catching about it, — the baby was not very ill, and would be all right in a day or two, she hoped. So the alarm subsided as quickly as it had arisen; but after so complete a diversion they naturally did not return to the previous subject of interest, and Rod had something of the sensations of a king dethroned, — or rather of a President who fails of reëlection, — and he carried off his discomfiture as I imagine the king and President do theirs — put his hands in his pockets and whistled.

CHAPTER V.

NEXT morning the children all started together to walk to the post-office

It was Elinor's turn to be postman, and carry the pretty mail-pouch of Mexican cut leather; and of course the other three girls escorted her; while Rod's bicycle having broken down, as rented wheels have a way of doing, he had nothing better to do than to walk with them.

When all the rest were ready to start, Marigold was missing, and had to be waited for.

At last she came, carrying on her arm a little basket, which made Mary think of last summer and the "poultry business."

It was not three brown eggs the basket held to-day, however; it was the promised nice things

for the Starrett baby, which Marigold had begged permission to carry to him herself.

She was still feeling as she had felt the night before, that something, she hardly knew what, was not fair to Jennie Starrett, and that she herself had more than her rightful share of happiness, and therefore owed something to Jennie to make things even.

It was a relief to this feeling to do something for the Starretts, even if it were only carrying a little basket which Andrews could have taken just as well.

Elinor thought Andrews might better have taken it, and made the suggestion promptly. The errand would take them out of their way, and the walk through the Cove village was not pretty.

For a moment Marigold felt impolite. Somehow it was impossible to like Elinor as well as Elizabeth. You may remember that "in the Lot" in McGowan's Lane Marigold had been considered "bossy." Elinor had a little of the

same characteristic, and when two people are both like that they rarely love each other very much.

Marigold was tempted to insist upon her point; but a glance at Mary's troubled eyebrows helped her to restrain herself. She proposed a compromise.

"There's no need for all of us to stop there. The rest of you can go right on and leave me at the bridge, and I'll go to Mrs. Starrett's, and walk on up the shore-path and meet you coming back."

They settled it so, — though Mary was not well pleased at leaving Marigold behind, alone; but since Elinor and Marigold were both content with that arrangement, it seemed the best thing to do.

So at the old bridge the party divided, the others following the foot-path out around the headland toward the village, while Marigold, basket in hand, picked her way along the stony

cart-road, past the evil-smelling fish-houses to the cottages beyond.

Her face was a little sober as she went. It was not quite pleasant to be left alone that way, and certainly it did not seem quite kind of Elinor to be unwilling to wait for her.

In fact it seemed to her that the visit of these cousins was interfering a good deal with that dear and close companionship with her twin Mary, which had grown so necessary to them both in the year they had lived together.

However, her cheerful and independent spirit could not stay cast down long; presently her little chin was as high as usual, and her chestnut-brown eyes wandering in quest of interest.

When they alighted on the little cluster of fishermen's houses, huddling close together and turning their backs to all the great, glorious out-of-doors around them, she laughed to herself as it struck her suddenly how like they were to the groups of neighbors she had so often seen in

McGowan's Lane, leaning over a gate or standing around the butcher's cart, their heads close together for a good gossip.

She passed Lemuel Starrett's house, and old Mr. Starrett's, and Ben Bourne's, — most of the people hereabout were either Bournes or Starretts, — and approached the Amos Starrett residence.

It did not look less lively than usual. Two of the children were squabbling for possession of the swing, two more were industriously digging out the foundations of the rickety door-step, and several babies wandered about at large.

When Marigold stepped up and knocked at the door, they all stood still to stare at her. "Ma's gone away," volunteered Lottie, — and instantly hid behind Beulah as Marigold turned toward her.

But Jennie had seen the caller from within, and the door flew open before Marigold had time to speak.

Jennie was overjoyed to receive her visitor. She shooed away the clustering children from the doorway, and emptied a chair for her, quite flushed with the pride of it.

But Marigold remained standing in the door, surprised at the unwonted quiet and emptiness of the kitchen.

"Why, where's your mother gone?" she asked, greatly puzzled; "and where's the baby?" and Jennie explained, with some pride in the circumstance, that her mother had taken the baby "into town" (the large town, six miles away, inland) "to see the doctor."

It seemed to Marigold a queer way to treat a sick baby; but no doubt its mother knew best.

She emptied her basket on the table, among the breakfast dishes, and began to deliver mamma's messages; but the little ones' faces fell so dolefully (they had followed her in, of course), and Jennie looked so abashed and disappointed as they saw she was about to go away, that Mari-

gold had not the heart to go at once. She took the offered chair, and the three faces brightened again.

It was not a particularly pleasant place to stay in; she would far rather have been out-of-doors.

She had been brought up in a house not much bigger or better than this one; but at least Mrs. Murray's kitchen had always been clean. Marigold thought of its shining yellow-painted floor, and the table scoured so smooth and white, and glanced about her with growing distaste for the dirt and disorder everywhere.

She had been well trained as helper to her neat, hard-working stepmother, and it almost seemed as if she *must* lay hands on the confusion of the comfortless room, and straighten things out.

Suddenly a bright thought occurred to her.

She knew right well the fascinations of the shore-path, — it would be a good hour before the girls would come back for her (Rod was not likely to come at all).

She smiled at Jennie with new cordiality. "No, I don't need to hurry," she answered her anxious question. "Would you like to have me stay awhile and play with you?"

Would they like it! Jennie blushed and stammered with joy, and Beulah and Lottie and little Alveria shouted a gleeful assent.

Marigold took command of them all instantly. You know she liked "bossing;" and it isn't often you get such a chance as this to have things all your own way, with every one else delighted to let you!

In two minutes she had planned it all out, and had fallen upon that slovenly kitchen with an energy never seen there before.

They were playing "keep house." Marigold was the mother, and all the others were her children. (Jennie usually preferred to be mother herself, but now she was only too happy to consent to anything the little "queen who wasn't grown up yet" might suggest.)

She set them all to work, ordering them about with a funny assumption of Mrs. Murray's briskest mood which kept them all laughing.

"My goodness! Haven't you got that fire made yet?" she scolded. "How are you going to wash dishes in cold water? Quick, now,—fly round!"

"Yes, ma," giggled Jennie, her hands full of kindlings and the matches in her mouth. Really it seemed fun to build a fire this way,—almost as much fun as if it were a play fire in a make-believe stove.

Marigold, meanwhile, was scraping and piling the dishes neatly, ready for washing.

"You children,"—she pounced suddenly on the two next biggest,—"you be clearing up this room. Stop,—wait till I tell you. Each of you is to put away a dozen things,—put them in their own proper places, mind,—and the one that finishes first can have"— they waited, open-mouthed, while her eyes went rather wildly over

the table in search of a prize — "can have a *big* slice of bread and molasses!" she finished triumphantly.

Somehow the way she said it sounded like plum-cake; and the children flew at the clothes, and playthings, and general litter, in a perfect fury of haste.

Marigold's hat was off now, and her sleeves tucked up. She was beginning to have a very good time herself.

When Jennie had, under orders, swept the floor, — raising a tremendous dust in the process, and constantly tripping over the fiercely competing Lottie and Beulah, — the teakettle was humming merrily, and the dishes were ready to be washed.

But then came a hunt for towels, for Marigold firmly refused to have anything to do with the stiff and dingy specimens which she found in a crumpled heap at the back of the table, and lifted with the tips of her fingers.

"MARIGOLD WASHED, AND JENNY, RUSHING TO AND FRO, HAD HARD WORK TO KEEP UP WITH HER."

In her character of severe mother she demanded "clean ones, — and lots of 'em!" and Jennie at last succeeded in producing a roller-towel and some clean rags, which were accepted.

Then they fell to work. Marigold washed, and Jennie, rushing to and fro between sink and table, had hard work to keep up with her.

They tried to see how near done they could be before the clock struck, and both found themselves hurrying as though their lives depended on it.

Perhaps they might have quite finished inside the limit of time, had not the anxious mother been obliged to stop and arbitrate a lively dispute between her two younger children, over the dust-pan, which each wished to add to her own score.

Marigold adjudged the pan to Beulah, and the dust in it to Lottie, so the quarrel was peacefully settled, and when Beulah claimed and received the prize, another threatened storm was

averted by awarding Lottie the "second prize" — also of bread and molasses.

Then they were kindly given permission to run out and play, and departed with their sticky trophies, leaving a remarkably neat and orderly room (compared with what it had been).

But faithful Jennie, proud of her post as first assistant, worked on without flagging until the last dish was in the closet, the towels washed and hung out to dry, the sink scalded and rubbed down, and the table scrubbed clean.

Then Marigold looked around the transformed kitchen (and if ever a kitchen was astonished at itself it must have been that morning), and drew a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"I do just love to wash dishes, when there is plenty of hot water and a lot of nice clean towels, don't you?"

No doubt Jennie believed she was telling the truth when she responded, fervently, "Oh, my, yes!" but, in reality, I fancy that was the first

time she had ever washed dishes in her life without hating the task, and shirking all she could of it.

"And won't your mother be pleased, when she gets home, so tired!" said Marigold, exultantly; and Jennie looked delighted at the prospect.

You see she liked and admired Marigold so much that she was ready to accept any idea she suggested. And this again was because Marigold was that kind of girl.

CHAPTER VI.

With a startled glance at the clock Marigold caught up her hat and turned to look for her basket.

"Why, how can it be so late?" she said in surprise. "I have been here more than an hour, and they will be waiting for me up on the hill. I must hurry!"

But at the door she turned to look once more around the tidy kitchen.

"I wish we could have washed the floor and blacked the stove," she said, regretfully. "That would be real fun."

"I guess there ain't any blacking," Jennie returned, with a vague impulse to console the regret, and Marigold, glancing again at the stove, thought it was very probable.

When she had gone Jennie also looked at the stove, and then, filled with the determination to do everything Marigold wished, she set to work energetically to rub it clean.

The result was not perfection, and perhaps she would better not have used the baby's apron for the purpose — but it was a step in the right direction.

As she worked away at it Jennie's mind was busy with a question she would have liked, but was too shy, to ask. How did Marigold, who was "summer folks" and lived in a fine big house, and drove in carriages, know so much about doing housework?

Jennie knew so little about the summer folks that her idea of them was very like the princesses in the fairy tales — sitting on velvet cushions and eating with golden spoons.

But as she thought it over she concluded that "rich folks must have work to do, same as poor folks, only probably it was elegant work."

Maybe their dish-towels were fringed, and the dish-pan was silver-plated, like Aunt Sarah's butter-dish.

Jennie could "s'pose," you see, as well as Mary and Marigold.

This new idea of the rich and great daintily performing their daily tasks was an inspiration to her. Jennie made a heroic resolve on the spot, that she would hereafter wash the dish-towels every day! In that way at least she could be like Marigold.

As for that little person, tripping blithely over the stony road to the shore, swinging her empty basket and singing to herself, how she would have laughed at Jennie's wonderful notions, and how readily and frankly she would have answered her question if it had been asked.

She went along the Cove road to the bridge and up the shore-path above the cliffs of Ship Head, humming her little song and swinging her basket, in a very contented mood. She had quite

forgotten her little grievance against Elinor, so much had happened since then.

As she followed the turns of the path among the ledges and bayberry thickets she kept a bright lookout for the other children, both ahead and behind her. It was strange she did not see them anywhere. Could they have tired of waiting and gone on home without her? That *would* be mean!

A little frown-pucker began to show itself faintly between her eyebrows, as the idea became more and more probable.

But before the pucker had time to grow into a real frown the path jumped down over a low-lying ledge, and Marigold jumped with it — almost on top of Rod, who was lying flat on his back in the sunshine, eating checkerberry leaves, and apparently doing nothing else at all.

"Why, Rod," cried Marigold, laughing as she recovered her balance, — "I almost smashed you! What are you doing there?"

"Waiting for you," he answered, briefly, sitting up and shaking himself like a dog.

"But where are the rest?" she asked, puzzled, and looked around, half expecting to find them hidden under the bayberry bushes.

"Didn't come — gone home the other road," he returned, still briefly; but after a moment's pause, to see how she took it, he chuckled at the expressiveness of her silent, close-shut lips, and condescended to explain further.

"We met the What-do-you-call-'ems — the people at the red cottage — in their automobile, and they offered us a ride home, 'round by way of the north village. Girls wanted to go, of course — so they piled in.

"Mary didn't like it a bit," he went on, laughing again. "She'd rather have come back to meet you, but she had to go because they were 'company;' — so I told her I'd let you know."

He might have told a little more; how, moved by his little cousin's troubled face as she hesitated

between politeness and affection, — and perhaps moved partly, too, by the slight to Marigold, — he had given up his own plans for the morning and settled the difficulty by offering to go back and meet her himself. So Mary, relieved and grateful, was able to go with her guests with a mind at ease.

Marigold stood listening to the story, absently stripping the bay branches through her fingers, and with the frown-pucker showing again pretty plainly.

But she couldn't help guessing the part he left out, and as he ended the pucker vanished, and Marigold's smile flashed out at him with a sudden friendly heartiness that surprised him.

"Clear grit!" he said to himself, approvingly. "Won't show she's hurt or mad." And he liked this trait in her so much that in another minute he was astonished to hear himself making a proposal which had not entered his head until that moment.

"Say — we don't have to go home yet, — it's a long time to luncheon. Come back down to the Cove and let's have some fun."

"All right, let's," was all she said; but as she followed him back along the path, her face was shining. She was as proud and happy as she had made Jennie Starrett an hour ago.

To be going off somewhere with Rodney alone, — to be asked to go, — that was "fun" enough for her, whatever it might be that he was planning to do.

He sauntered on in front, hands in pockets, whistling by snatches, and she followed in deep, silent content.

Presently he broke off a popular song in the middle to ask again, curiously, over his shoulder:

"What on earth kept you so long down there? I've been waiting about six hours. Anybody sick or dead?"

Marigold had not explained her doings before, simply because it had not occurred to her that

Rod would take any interest in so purely domestic an episode. But if he did care enough to ask about it she was quite ready and pleased to tell; and full of the pleasant new sense of comradeship, she chattered away as freely as she would have talked to Mary.

By the time they were picking their way across the pebbly beach, at the mouth of the Cove, Rodney was in possession of all the main facts and most of the details of the morning's visit, even to the dish-towels and the stove-blacking (or lack of it).

She made a bright, gay little story of it; and Rod listened and laughed, but made no comment till she had ended. Then he remarked, but not unsympathetically, "So that's your idea of fun, is it? — Clearing up a dirty house for people that are too lazy to do it themselves!"

"Oh, but it wasn't just the fun of it, Rod — that wasn't all," broke in Marigold, very earnestly. "I was thinking of something else, too,

really I was! Because if they found it was fun to clear up, and nice to be clean and neat, don't you think they *might* keep it up? Jennie was pleased, ever so pleased!"

"Why, yes, of course," Rod agreed, heartily. "They'll most likely keep right on," and to himself he added, "for two days!" But he did not say it aloud, and as he saw her earnest face brighten at his approval he was glad he had not. "Anyhow, *you're* a brick, Marigold!" he finished.

In days gone by Marigold had more than once been called "Brick-top" by a displeased stepbrother or playmate, and for an instant she regarded Rod's unconscious back with some suspicion. Then she laughed quietly, realizing that those old days of rudeness and squabbles were indeed gone by.

Then she fell to wondering why they were coming back to the Cove. What was the "fun" which he proposed?

Presently she began to understand!

They were not aiming for the village road, but right across the rough shingle of the beach to where Hosea Starrett's punt was pulled up high and dry on the pebbles — a sure sign that Hosea was not going to use it that morning, for all the other men's punts were already riding out in the Cove.

They were going out in a boat! Marigold caught her breath in a gasp of sheer delight.

Never in all her eleven years had she been in a boat before.

All summer she had seen the beautiful dories, flying out to sea under their white sails like the great white gulls, and flying home again with their loads, or rocking and dipping at rest in the Cove, and had longed to fly with them, but only as one watches the soft white summer clouds and longs to sail with them through the summer sky, but with no hope or even thought of fulfilment.

And now — ! Marigold could have hugged

Rodney. Needless to say, she did not; she knew well how boys dislike a "fuss," and she only said, "Oh, are we going out rowing? How jolly!" as quietly as she could. But her eyes and the corners of her mouth said the rest in spite of her, and Rod was satisfied.

This was not one of the birdlike dories. Hosea Starrett's punt was a flat-bottomed, square-toed little affair, just like a long, shallow wooden box; also it was rather wet and not overclean. But boys never mind that sort of thing, and for this occasion Marigold too was a boy — for at last she was really "chums" with Rod!

Wasn't that pleasure enough to offset any possible drawbacks?

She tucked up her sleeves (for the second time that morning), took one of the rusty tins, and helped bale out the dirty water.

Rod, watching her, silently approved. "Takes hold like a good fellow, and does her share," he thought. "No fine lady about her."

But he saw, too, that she did her share as daintily as any fine lady could. The pretty clean frock was in no danger from the splashing water, and when she helped to pull the punt down the beach her neat little shoes suffered no harm.

Boys may not care for "fuss and feathers," but they do like a girl to be dainty — not too precisely like themselves, even though she is a bit of a tomboy, as Marigold certainly was.

CHAPTER VII.

Out on the water, — actually afloat on the ocean!

The little boat bobbed and danced and slid about on the surface of the water, as punts do, and Rod had plenty of work to keep her "head on" to the little rollers that came into the Cove.

"Now where shall we go?" he asked, amused by Marigold's rapturous face, as she sat perched on the stern seat, firmly clutching the sides, — and willing to heighten that rapture, while he was about it, by any means in his power.

To her the invitation to choose was as though Columbus had said to one of his sailors, "Where shall we go?" With the whole bright, breezy world of water and sky before them, — the whole

enchanting Atlantic coast behind, — how was one to choose?

But then a glorious idea flashed into her head. "Rodney! *Could* we go as far as the Seal Rocks?" she asked, half-afraid of the magnificence of her suggestion.

"Course, if you want to," he said, coolly, and laid his course across the Cove, past the little fleet of punts bobbing at their moorings.

The Seal Rocks lay off the end of Ship Head. They were, in fact, the outermost rocks of the long point, and were also the highest of a group of ugly ledges, avoided by the fishermen, except at the highest tide.

The idea of exploring them pleased Rodney, and he pulled stoutly out along the Head.

All their familiar haunts among the rocks looked strange from this new point of view. Marigold recognized one after another with cries of delighted surprise, and Rod laughed, indulgently, at her excitement.

Giving Marigold a good time, he found, was quite a lively entertainment for himself as well.

But when they got out beyond the shelter of the high shores, things began to look different. The wind was light, but aided by the current among the ledges, it made the water inconveniently rough, and it grew harder and harder to keep the dancing little punt straight.

He began to realize that he had undertaken a foolish voyage, but he only set his teeth and pulled the harder against the short chopping waves that slapped and twisted the punt about at their pleasure.

He watched Marigold covertly, curious once more to see "how she took it." It was high time for a girl to be getting scared.

Marigold held tight by the gunwale and laughed in pure glee as the little boat bobbed and dipped. When the bigger waves slapped the side and dashed the cold spray in her face

she screamed, to be sure, but it was from joyous excitement. She was too ignorant of danger even to be afraid, and all her natural pluck and daring rejoiced in the adventure.

Rod watched her wondering, and his mental comment was an exact echo of Dick Saunders's verdict a year ago, "Well, of all the plucky kids!"

But perhaps he was giving her courage too much credit; for besides the great advantage of her ignorance she had another; she did not feel responsible, as he did, for the success of the expedition, — and for getting home alive.

Moreover, she was not doing the rowing!

It was impossible to make a landing on those ugly, jagged, black rocks, with the white water plunging and churning among them, but they got near enough to see and enjoy, half-terrified, all the wild, savage beauty of it, and "to feel that they had been there," as Marigold said.

She was quite content now, and offered no

protest when the boat was headed again for the Cove.

Rodney was more than content — he was immensely relieved. They had the wind behind them now, and the row home took only half the time it had taken to come out. Long before she had had enough of it the punt bumped and scraped on the shingle of the beach, and Marigold's first voyage was ended.

Rod sprang out and made fast with a turn of the rope around a convenient stone.

Marigold followed, and then stood watching with interest while he selected a suitable stone for a hammer and stepped back into the punt to pound down a loosened cleat in the stern.

He was anxious that Hosea should find nothing amiss about the boat after he had borrowed it; and he was so busy making sure that all was shipshape that he did not notice how his movements and his weight at the stern were loosening the boat from her hold on the pebbles.

But presently a little wave of the rising tide lifted her clear altogether, and as she swung around Rod sprang to his feet in alarm, and took in the situation.

"Hi, there, the painter's loose! Catch it, quick!" he shouted.

Poor Marigold stared around her in bewilderment. Her only association with the word "painter" was a man under a white umbrella (of whom there were many on that lovely coast), and for a moment she had a wild vision of herself pursuing some mad artist over the rocks. Then she saw Rod's pointing hand, as he repeated, anxiously, "The painter — that rope! Get hold of it, — put your foot on it; I'm going adrift!"

Marigold understood now, and snatched at the rope, which slipped away from under her fingers like some live thing making for the water. She sprang forward and snatched again, but without success.

Rod was scrambling forward to jump ashore,

but the shifting of his weight only hastened the movement of the boat, and all in a moment it was too late to jump — he was fairly adrift.

There was no danger, of course. The oars were on the beach, but it would have been easy enough to jump out and swim, or even wade, ashore, — with or without the punt. Still, the ducking would be disagreeable in itself, and Rod's call was sharp with hurry.

And Marigold did not stop to reason it out. The suddenness of the emergency, and her total ignorance of the possibilities of boats' ill-behavior, quite upset her ordinary presence of mind, and she was conscious of nothing but impending disaster. The beautiful voyage — her happy morning with Rod — was ending in failure, in catastrophe, and it was all her fault! She might have saved him, but she was not quick enough.

The loss of Hosea's punt, — Rodney drowned or drifting out to sea, — all sorts of dreadful ideas

"'GREAT SCOTT, MARIGOLD, LOOK AT YOUR SHOES!'"

flashed through her frightened head in an instant of time. In another instant, or hardly more, she had hold of that rope — and was standing in nearly a foot of cold sea water! One last desperate leap and clutch had done it; and Rod was saved.

He did not seem particularly grateful. "Well, now you *have* done it!" was his comment, as she pulled the boat in and he sprang ashore. "Great Scott, Marigold, look at your shoes!"

The injunction was quite unnecessary; she *was* looking at them, and with considerable dismay. For most of the years of her life nice clothes had been such rare and precious possessions to Marigold that it was impossible not to regard them with care and respect even now when she wore them every day.

Rod was laughing. "I owe you a pair of shoes for that," he said; — "you saved my life, you know," but to himself he repeated that Marigold was a brick, if she *was* a goose to

jump like that. He appreciated the gallant little rescue, and really was grateful to her; and when he saw her face of sorrowful concern his own sobered quickly. "What's the matter? Will Aunt May be mad?" he questioned, kindly.

Mamma Merington mad! The idea brought the curl of laughter back to Marigold's lips in a twinkling; but still she gazed ruefully at the pretty shoes.

She consulted Rodney. "What can I do? — they squish so, when I step! Shall I take them off? I don't mind walking home barefoot — not *much*," she added, truthfully, thinking of Elinor.

"Oh, no, keep 'em on. It's the only way to dry 'em without their getting stiff," counselled Rod, much experienced in wet feet. "But you want to walk fast and keep warm, or you'll be catching cold." Girls always *were* catching colds, he reflected, with some alarm; and grasping her arm he hurried her up the hill at a breathless pace.

They did walk fast, and they took all the short cuts. By the time they were in sight of the house the little shoes had almost ceased to "squish," and Marigold was rosy and glowing. At Rodney's anxious query, "Say, do you suppose you did catch cold?" she broke into her merriest laugh.

"*Cold*, — I'm burning up! I never have colds — at least except when it's burglars in the rain." (Marigold always tried to be strictly accurate. She was "literal-minded," don't you remember?)

"But, Rod, — wait a minute." They were turning the last corner, and she plucked his sleeve, a little shyly, to hold him back. "I just want you to know," she murmured. "I don't mind the getting wet, — not the least bit, truly, — for we did have such a lovely time, didn't we?"

"We did that!" he responded, cheerfully; and then he delighted her soul by adding, as if he meant it: "And you are a jolly one to go

anywhere, Marigold. You don't mind things, — and you're not a 'fraid-cat."

She looked up at him with shining eyes. "'Most as good as a boy?" she suggested, smiling but wistful.

"Better'n some boys!" he assured her; and Marigold's heart swelled with pride and joy. Mary *had* been wrong.

They turned the corner then, and the other girls, watching for them from the piazza, rushed to meet them, with a flood of questions.

"Where *have* you been, all this time? We got home ages ago!"

While Rodney laughed and teased, and baffled their curiosity, Marigold slipped away indoors. She was impatient to get rid of those squishing shoes, and she could not rest till she had found mamma and confessed her carelessness.

No, Mamma Merington was not "mad" — that was not her way; but when she understood how the accident had happened, and whither the

reckless pair of mariners had voyaged, she looked so grave and so distressed that Marigold was filled with remorse and grief, remembering too late that mamma was "nervous about boats."

Eager to make amends, she offered to promise never to go out in one again; but mamma accepted the sacrifice only in a modified form. If Marigold would promise not to go without the knowledge of either herself or papa, her mind would be quite easy, — for she knew the child was true as steel, and that the promise once made would be sacredly kept.

But with Rodney the case was different. Mamma was sensible, and knew that a big fellow of fifteen need not be kept out of boats, if he knows anything about them. So she bravely controlled her nervous anxiety, and did not attempt to restrict his enjoyment.

But you see she was thinking only of Hosea's punt, and the dories. She did not know a word about Renshaw's yacht!

L. OF C.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAILING day came, and the cousins went, that is, the twins and their mother, — for, as Rodney had foreseen, his father was rather pleased than otherwise by his change of plans, and had sent ready permission to "do as he liked, provided his aunt was willing to be bothered with him." So Rodney stayed.

It seemed very quiet at first, when the bustle of departure was over, and the long, jolly visit at an end.

Mary and Marigold felt a little lonely, happy though they always were in each other's company, and they privately wondered if Rod were not lonesome, too, — sorry, now when it was too late, that he had let himself be left behind.

If so he kept it to himself, and the only sign

of it was that he seemed rather more content than usual with his little cousins' society, and spent most of his time with them for the first few days.

Pleased and flattered by his companionship, and affectionately anxious to divert his mind from possible regrets, the little girls did their very best to please and entertain him, and for awhile everything went charmingly.

They bathed every morning, down on the pretty Half Moon Beach, and Rod taught Marigold to float and to swim on her back.

Even Mary was coaxed by the other two to float, and delighted to lie with the little warm waves rippling about her face, but only when Rod was close at hand to be grasped the moment her courage gave out. She was like her mother, and would never be very brave in the water.

But to Marigold it was the keenest delight to breast the waves on the rough breezy mornings, and try her strength against theirs. She learned very quickly, and Rod was so proud of his pupil

that he took great interest in teaching her all the tricks he knew.

After the bath was over they would roam along the beach and climb out over the rocks toward Ship Head, exploring all the delightful chasms and ledges, and always on the lookout for new treasures for their store.

There was a new charm now in these collections, for it had been decided that the family were to go to Berket, after all, for a little while in September.

There were repairs and alterations being made in the house there, which mamma wished to see and direct for herself, and of course her twins must be with her.

So all Marigold's pretty plans for the visit to her old Murray home were revived, and new ones were added daily.

None of her friends and playmates in McGowan's Lane had ever seen the sea; and Marigold, brimful of friendly enthusiasm, meant to carry to

them as much of the sea as she could. The biggest starfish, and the smallest baby ones, the pinkest and the purplest sea-urchins, great white sea-clamshells and pretty violet mussels, — all were eagerly sought and carefully saved for Maggie and Nellie and the rest; and the children were as happy in looking forward to the distribution of these simple gifts as if they had been real gems from the caves of ocean.

Rodney was admitted to all their plans now, and though he took a less vital interest in McGowan's Lane than did "Mary 'n' Mary," he enjoyed the fun of collecting, and cheerfully risked his neck (not to mention his clothes) in securing beauties that would have been quite beyond their reach.

Yes, it was all very pleasant for awhile; pity it could not have lasted longer. But no doubt it was only natural that presently Rodney began to weary of the little girls' childish amusements, and little by little to drift back to the companions

and pursuits that were more exciting, though less wholesome for him.

Some new fellows had arrived at the hotel, — there was quite a group of them now, most of them a little older than Rod, which, of course, made their society all the more to be desired.

They spent much time in the hotel bowling-alleys; most of them smoked cigarettes; and when the younger boy was allowed to share in all these grown-up pastimes on terms of equality it is not surprising that he was flattered and rather lost his head.

At any rate, so it was. Rodney soon became fairly skilful at the bowling, and smoked stoutly with the rest (though at first he found it a little difficult to acquire a taste for burnt paper), and was quite indispensable for the yachting trips.

Mary and Marigold saw less and less of him in these days, and at last were forced once more to reverse their judgment and sadly agree that Mary was right after all, about boys.

They were talking of it one afternoon when they had hoped for his company and help in some small enterprise, and had been disappointed.

Mary was quite as sorry now to find herself right as she had formerly been glad to believe herself mistaken.

"I don't see why the things we do are not as nice as those boys' things," she mused mournfully.

"They are nicer — and we do more of them!" returned Marigold, petulantly. "But it's just as you said — he'd rather go up to the hotel and do stupid things, just because those other boys do!"

This was a rather exaggerated version of gentle Mary's theory — but she let it pass. In her dejection she was even ready to carry it further.

"Then it must be," she said, pensively, "he thinks the boys are nicer than we are."

"Well, they're not!" snapped Marigold. (Her crossness was for Rodney, never for

Mary.) "Didn't our soldier say we were the jolliest little pair he ever played with, that day he built the cunning little fence around my calico garden? I wish he were here — *he'd* play with us!"

Mary lifted her drooping head quickly, her eyes wide and bright with inspiration.

"Why, Marigold, we'll have him! Why not let's?" (In moments of excitement Mary's grammar was all her own.) "I know he'd love to come, and wouldn't it be splendid! Come ask mamma, quick!"

They asked mamma — here is the result.

Our dear Soldier Dick

Please come and see us.

We request the pleasure of your company to spend Sunday and play with us.

Mamma says come Friday and play all Saturday and we hope it wont rain but pleas come anyway Marigold can swim on her back

But Mary can swim

beautifully too.

Please come we will
show you everything,
we want to see
you very much.

Mary
Marigold.

Mamma was well pleased with her daughters' plan.

She liked Dick Saunders, you know, the first time she saw him; and since then she had come to know and like him still better. And believing as she did that his friendship with the two little girls was a thing which would do all three good, she was very willing to allow the eager little hostesses to send their joint invitation.

By the same mail, though they did not know it, went two other letters, from mamma herself, — one to Dick, repeating the children's invitation, and the other an explanation to Papa Merington which ensured Dick's leave of absence. For Dick, for some months past, had been employed in the big business that belonged to papa. (It was something about leather; and there were big new buildings going up this summer, which kept everybody extra busy.)

The children's letter was a very important, a

momentous, piece of work, and as soon as it was signed, sealed, and stamped, they must needs go at once to the village to mail it with their own hands.

In the post-office they saw Rod, with some of his new friends, and smiled mysteriously at him in answer to his nod.

Their minds about Rod were not the same. For once, Mary and Marigold disagreed; for Mary hoped he would not dislike their asking another visitor, while Marigold hoped, a little spitefully, that he *would*. "It would show him!"

Both, however, were agreed to keep it a secret till the time came.

So they pushed their letter through the slot under the little window, and marched back past the boys with an air of vast importance and mystery.

"Hello, what's up?" asked Rod, amused; but they only shook their heads and smiled.

As they made their way through the crowd about the door, Marigold felt a hand on her sleeve, and turned to find Jennie Starrett just behind her, and pressing close to whisper in her ear.

"Say! We blacked the stove, Beulah and me did, — while ma was gone to the store! Aunt Sarah let us have some blacking."

Jennie's face was so full of eagerness and pleasure, it made quite another girl of her; and Marigold's own face lit up in response with interest and sympathy.

"Oh, that's splendid! Wasn't she astonished?" she whispered back; and Jennie nodded, beaming, as the crowd pressed them apart.

If her mother's surprise had not already repaid Jennie for her unwonted effort, Marigold's pleased look would have done so, — that and the pride of "having a secret" with this nicest one of all the summer folks.

A proud and happy girl was Jennie Starrett,

walking home among an eager, inquisitive group of playmates, and baffling all their inquiries as to "what she was talking with that Merington girl about" with a lofty tilt of her head and a tantalizing "Oh, something."

And Mary and Marigold also walked down the street, smiling and happy in the possession of *their* secret. And Mary, too, was curious. "What *was* Jennie Starrett whispering to you about?"

But Marigold did not try to evade the question; indeed, she hardly waited for it, and Mary, who already knew the first chapter of the story, was as pleased and interested in this second one as heart could wish.

Mary could not have done what Marigold did,—she would never have had the courage, even if she had had the same experience in housework; but Marigold having done it, her sympathetic imagination enabled her to enter into it perfectly, and before the two reached

home, they had "s'posed" new paint and window blinds on to the Starrett house, — not to mention a white picket fence and grass in the dooryard.

Then, having provided for the comfort and prosperity of the Starrett family, their thoughts returned with fresh interest to their own affairs, and they began again, — for the dozenth time, perhaps — to enjoy in advance all the delights of Dick Saunders's visit.

CHAPTER IX.

When Dick Saunders received those two letters, on a hot August day in the city, he was quite as pleased as the children had hoped. He was even more pleased, — for the children had not known how hot the August days were in the city!

Dick was working hard that summer, and had given himself very little time for play.

He not only worked hard in the daytime, but spent most of his evenings studying, for Papa Merington had promised him a better position in his office, just as soon as he was fitted for it — and Dick had two good reasons for trying very hard to earn his promotion.

First, like all bright and ambitious young men, he wanted to make his way upward in the world

as fast as he could, — and secondly, he was so grateful to the whole Merington family for their kindness and interest in him, that he felt no amount of hard work would be too much to prove that their kindness had not been wasted.

So he stayed in his room with his books on many a warm evening or Saturday afternoon when he would far rather have been out-of-doors amusing himself.

But here was a holiday, — and the most delightful sort of holiday possible, — which he not only might, but actually ought, to take, since Mrs. Merington and those two blessed children wanted him!

Dick had no little sisters of his own, and he was very fond of "Mary 'n' Mary," as he still called them.

He came down Friday afternoon, and Andrews drove him over from the station.

It happened that the whole family were gath-

ered on the piazza when he arrived; for mamma was just saying good-by to some callers, while the children were waiting impatiently for the return of the carriage.

At the moment it turned into the driveway, three of the party — the two visitors and Rodney — received a surprise; for at the same moment the two pretty, well-behaved little girls who had sat quietly and politely listening to their elders sprang to their feet with a joyful shriek of "There he is — Dick's come!" and flew to meet him.

Rodney knew by this time that a guest was expected, but he had not quite grasped the idea that said guest was the peculiar property of Mary and Marigold.

In his ignorance he had rather appropriated the visit to himself, and thought it would be pleasant to have "another fellow" in the house, even though he were a good deal older than himself.

But if the children surprised him, so also did the "other fellow."

One of the nicest things about Dick Saunders — the one thing, perhaps, for which Mamma Merington liked him more than for any other one — was that he not only was very fond of the little girls, but was not a bit ashamed to show it.

He jumped from the carriage as they ran to meet it, and hugged and kissed them both as though they had really been his own little sisters (as more than once, in lonely moments, he had wished they were).

As he came up the steps to meet mamma and be introduced to the strangers, the children were still clinging to him on either side, and he didn't seem to mind at all, or feel in the least embarrassed.

Rodney looked on in wonderment.

And yet he couldn't help liking Dick — though he very soon saw his mistake in expecting that *he* was to entertain him. For the girls had

still better reason to consider that their soldier belonged wholly to *them*, and did not scruple to take entire possession of him, though they kindly allowed Rodney to come along, too, if he wished.

Dick Saunders was just the kind of young man that a boy of Rod's age would naturally admire, — lively and jolly, and ready for any sort of fun; and he was also a very honest, manly, straightforward kind of fellow, as any one might see.

But this, strange to say, seemed almost to repel, instead of attracting Rod.

He himself did not understand — or, if he did, would not admit to himself — why it should give him that fretful, resentful feeling; but it certainly did, at times, and during the three days of Dick's visit Rodney behaved in an oddly capricious fashion, now joining the others in their fun, and then suddenly breaking away to go off by himself.

Meanwhile Dick, on his side, was quietly taking a few notes, — "sizing him up," I suppose he would have said, — and with not a very favorable result. There were only a few days, to be sure, and nothing special happened; but several little things gave him hints.

There was that first night, for instance, when they started to build a bonfire on the beach, just at the edge of twilight.

The children loved dearly to gather the bits of driftwood scattered along the line of high tide, and pile them into a hot, red, snapping blaze among the rocks, back of the beach.

They seized eagerly on this opportunity — for of course they were allowed to build fires only when some "grown-up" was there to take care of them.

Dick took as much interest in it as any of them, but in the midst of their preparations he stopped suddenly in comic dismay.

"Hello!" he cried, "how are you going to

make a fire without a match? Do you use flint and steel in this part of the country?"

The little girls paused with their arms full of wood, their faces reflecting his dismay. They had taken for granted that "grown-ups" always had matches. Papa always did — and Andrews. To be sure, Dick was not so *very* much grown-up.

"Got a light?" Dick asked Rod, as he came up dragging a fine big backlog. He meant it only as a joke; but Rod very coolly nodded and handed him — not a match, but a box of matches.

Dick took it without comment, but as he bent over his improvised fireplace there was a queer expression on his face for a moment. You would think the innocent-looking little box had told him something.

It was a glorious bonfire! It roared and sparkled and streamed up into the evening air till it lighted the whole face of the cliff with a

rosy flare. And there must have been some bit of real ship-wood in it, too; for down on one side were the loveliest little shooting flames of blue and green and violet. And they all sat around watching and exclaiming over them, shielding their burnt cheeks from the blaze, wiping the smoke-tears from their eyes, and having a perfectly lovely time, until it was almost dark, and mamma came out across the grass to the top of the cliff-steps, to call them in to dinner.

Then there were Saturday and Sunday, two whole days, and half of Monday, with Dick. And they made the most of every minute.

They bathed, they climbed over the rocks, they drove for miles along the beautiful road between the sea and the hills. They sat out on their favorite ledge in the pasture, and saw the evening star rise out of the sea, and the hunter's moon come up clear and pale from the horizon or large and golden out of a bank of haze.

When on Monday afternoon Dick Saunders said good-by to them all, and turned his face back toward the city, it was after the happiest little visit of his life.

He felt refreshed, and strong enough to face the rest of the city summer very cheerfully, and the hard work and study seemed twice as worth while as they had before.

Mamma Merington had enjoyed the visit, too, as well as the young folks. There had been time among all the frolics and excursions for a few quiet little talks; and while she found Dick much improved in little things, in the big ones he was just the same, — honest, and brave, and warm-hearted, as well as light-hearted.

"Yes, Dick certainly *pays!*" she wrote to Papa Merington.

Mary and Marigold were perfectly happy, of course, while the visit lasted, and when it was ended found themselves much refreshed in spirits, and less depressed than they had been be-

fore it by the desertion of Rodney. It was quite as possible, after all, to enjoy life without his assistance as it had been before he came.

So it seemed that Dick's visit had made everybody happy, and done everybody good, — excepting Rod!

Rod's feelings continued to be a good deal mixed. He liked Dick Saunders, — he even admired him; but that was just the reason why Dick made him uncomfortable. He could not avoid a vexatious consciousness that if Dick knew him better, he would not approve of him, and though he was not yet ready to give up those doubtful ways of amusing himself, still that provoking consciousness took much of the pleasure out of them.

So you may judge for yourself whether Dick's coming had really done *every*body good.

No one in the world could say there was the least bit of priggishness about Dick Saunders, — and yet a few cutting remarks he had dropped

casually about the "smartness" of cigarette smoking, had almost made Rodney think that perhaps he would drop it when he went back to the city.

(Of course he understood those remarks had not been aimed at *him*. He never smoked about the house, so Dick could not have known anything about it.)

The discomfort of these mixed feelings had the not uncommon effect of making Rod cross. In the days that followed Dick's departure he grew so irritable that the little cousins did not know what to make of him. They were snapped at and snubbed when they could not even guess what they had done to deserve it!

"It does seem," sighed gentle Mary in despair, "as if Dick's coming had only made him twice as worse!" And though she joined doubtfully in Marigold's laugh at the way she said it, they both agreed that what she said was true.

At last Rodney deserted them altogether, and

for some days they saw as little of him, almost, as though he had been living at the hotel outright.

It seems strange, doesn't it, that Mamma Merington should not have known about all this; she was usually the confidant of every smallest trouble.

But you see Rod was growing unpleasantly skilful (I don't like to say sly) in arranging his comings and goings. And as for the girls, though they were hurt and vexed sometimes, they were both too generous and too proud to complain of Rod to any one, even dear mamma.

If Rod didn't like them, after all, — if they were not nice enough to make him *want* to stay with them, — it was a grievous thing, but not a thing to bear talking about.

They did not say much even to each other, but did their best to have a good time without him, and not to think too much about the good times they had hoped to have with him.

CHAPTER X.

Two of the children seemed to be out of sorts that morning.

Rodney was silent and moody, as he so often was in these days; while Marigold also was sober, for her, and a little pucker of doubt and perplexity came between her eyebrows as often as she looked at him. Rod noticed it, as well as Mary, and it annoyed him vaguely, and made him still more "grumpy."

However, the forenoon passed quietly, with no further sign of a coming storm. Very soon after breakfast Rod disappeared, and the girls went down to the beach to resume the "Landing of the Norsemen."

This play had grown out of mamma's stories, and had gone on for some time without losing its charm.

There were quite a number now of the square stone huts outlined, each with its neat little fireplace in the centre. Dick Saunders had spent one arduous morning moving the big corner stones for them — and there were also a "fort" on the landward side of the village, to protect it from the terrible "Skraellings," and a stone-paved causeway leading down to the landing-place for the galleys. "NORUMBEGA" was spelled out in white pebbles in this pavement — a fine touch which, no doubt, Leif Ericson would wish he had thought of himself.

But when the children met again, a little while before luncheon, Marigold's perplexity, whatever it was, came back; and Mary, who was very sensitive, distinctly felt a sense of coming trouble in the air.

The truth was that Marigold was nerving herself to an unpleasant and possibly risky proceeding; and though Dick Saunders had done her no more than justice when he called her "a plucky

kid," it needed all her pluck to interfere with Rodney in his present temper.

Marigold knew something about Rod — she had known it ever since yesterday, when she had gone into the post-office alone, while Mary was doing another errand. So she knew something that Mary did not.

Her present trouble was that she felt it her duty to remonstrate with Rod. Anything that was not fair to mamma ought to be stopped, if possible, at whatever risk of unpleasantness to herself.

She had tried to plan the gentlest and easiest way of leading up to the subject; but perhaps she was a little too anxious about it, or else she got nervous as the time grew short, — for she made a mistake after all.

The beginning was all right, when she asked Rod if he would not go with them after luncheon to gather fir balsam for their pillows. A boy and his jack-knife, she hinted persuasively,

would make a very useful addition to their party.

But Rod refused rather shortly, saying he had something else to do that afternoon; and when she ventured, her heart beating a little fast, to ask what, answered still more curtly, "Never you mind."

At that a color crept into Marigold's cheeks that was not all of embarrassment, and it was then she became flurried and said the wrong thing.

"Rod — you know how nervous mamma is about boats. Do you think you ought — " and then he interrupted, and the carefully planned remonstrance turned suddenly into something else.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, sharply. "I haven't said anything about boats."

"You have, too!" she retorted, startled by the anger in his tone, but promptly resenting it also, and ready to defend herself. "You were talking

to that horrid Renshaw boy in the post-office, and you said — "

"And you hung 'round and listened, did you?" Rod broke in, hotly. "Well, I didn't think you were that kind of a girl! And I tell you what, Marigold, if you will just kindly mind your own affairs, you'll be in a lot better business than spying on mine!"

"What do you mean, Rod Merington?" blazed Marigold. "You *know* I don't spy! If you talk secrets in the middle of the post-office, how can anybody help hearing? It must have been something you were ashamed of, or you wouldn't be so afraid of my knowing about it, anyway!" she finished, scathingly.

The battle was on, now! For two minutes more there was a hot exchange of wild and angry words.

Poor little Mary, unused to quarrelling, and frightened and distressed beyond measure, tried in vain to stop them with her gentle pleading.

"Oh, Marigold, don't! He didn't mean it,— did you, Rod?"

Neither of them paid the slightest attention to her, and Mary felt very much as though she had been caught up in a whirlwind without a moment's warning.

But in a few moments more, the storm was over as suddenly as it had begun. Marigold flung away with a last parting shot of bitterness and scorn, and rushed up-stairs to the refuge of her own room, while Rod stalked out of doors, hands in his pockets to show his lofty indifference, and an expression of stern wrath on his face to contradict it.

Mary, in sympathetic desperation between the two, flew after Marigold, giving Rodney up as a bad job.

She found her twin in a state of high excitement, but not crying as she had feared. Marigold was still too angry for the relief of tears; what she wanted was not consolation, but simply

a chance to pour out her wrath and grievance to a sympathizing listener, and she overwhelmed the gentle little sister with almost as violent an outburst as the first, down-stairs, had been.

Marigold had not been so angry since the days when she was Mary Murray, squabbling with her Murray brothers and the neighborhood children, who played in the gravel-pits in McGowan's Lane.

In this last happy year among sweet-tempered, gentle-mannered people there had been little occasion for anger; and it had been so long since she had had a fit of passion that she had quite forgotten the blind, stifling pain of it. But it had come upon her now with cruel suddenness as her naturally warm temper sprang into a blaze under the sharp provocation of Rodney's unjust blame.

Half of her passion, no doubt, was really grief and disappointment at the downfall of her hopes. She liked Rod and admired him so much, and

had been so happy in their growing comradeship, — eleven years old was so proud and flattered by the notice and liking of fifteen years old!

And now everything was all spoiled. Rod *didn't* like her, at all! He said she was a spy, and that girls were always mean and prying — had requested her to mind her own business in future and let him alone, and had even made an insulting reference to dolls!

Marigold never had cared much about playing with dolls, — and at this moment she was ready to trample all the dolls in the world under her feet.

Mary understood, of course, that Marigold was not angry with *her;* but that knowledge did not make it much more comfortable to be scolded at so violently; and after sympathizing and soothing until she was at her wits' end, she eagerly welcomed a diversion, though it came in an unwelcome form.

With ready tact she made the most of it.

"My goodness!" She was at the window, and it was a cautious whisper, but full of dismay. "Here are visitors — a whole carriageful — coming in at the gate! And we were to have luncheon an hour early because I am going to the dentist with mamma. *Do* you s'pose they'll stay long?"

The diversion was successful. It turned Marigold's thoughts from the late unpleasantness, and she came over to the window to scowl at the unconscious ladies in the buckboard.

"Prob'ly," she answered, gloomily.

It was a very sober-faced pair of twins that appeared in the dining-room when luncheon was announced; but as soon as the first embarrassing moment of entering and being noticed by the visitors was over they began to feel it a relief, after all, to have so many people there: for in the pleasant confusion of talk and laughter among the elders nobody was likely to notice that something was wrong with the children.

Rodney was there, of course; but, of course, also, he behaved himself, and neither mamma nor the guests noticed that he and Marigold were not on speaking terms or that she went without salt rather than ask him for it.

I don't know which of the three children was most uncomfortable during the meal, the two cross ones, or their innocent victim, Mary, who tried to talk to both by turns and met with no success in either direction.

The poor child began to look forward to her dreaded visit to the dentist with positive pleasure. She would be away, alone with dear mamma, all the afternoon — and an afternoon is a long, long time; it was not necessary to look beyond it — troubles would smooth themselves out somehow.

Marigold also was thinking of the long afternoon ahead, but with very different feelings. It seemed so unlucky and so disagreeable that to-day, of all days, she and Rod should be left together "to keep house," as mamma had said gaily —

little guessing how little pleasure the two housekeepers felt in the prospect.

Silently Marigold determined to do nothing of the kind — unless, that is, she should be directly told to do so. She had no intention of keeping house with Rodney a moment longer than appearances compelled her to.

So, lonely as it seemed to have mamma and Mary gone for all those hours, there was a great relief to Marigold in the thought of being alone — of rushing off somewhere, away from everybody, herself included if possible — of not having to talk to company, to look pleasant, to behave like a good proper chlld. Her plans were already laid, and her place of refuge chosen.

And Rodney seemed to have a like idea; for as soon as luncheon was over he quietly took himself off, no one knew when or whither.

The guests departed, and then immediately after it was time for the others to start for their train.

When it came to the point Mary was almost ready to cry. It seemed so selfish to be going away to the dentist and leaving poor unhappy Marigold alone.

Mamma too felt sorry for the little girl left behind, and just before she stepped into the carriage she brought out a little parting "surprise," to brighten the downcast little face, — a pretty pink box full of marshmallows.

It did brighten — Marigold made a brave effort to be pleasant. She kissed them both and smiled and waved good-by as they drove away.

Then she turned and flew up-stairs in a tremendous hurry, lest any of the maids should see and ask her where she was going.

Not that she believed it wrong to go — but if any one even knew where she was it would spoil the feeling she craved, of being hidden away from all the world.

CHAPTER XI.

When Rodney slipped away from the house so promptly after luncheon he had something of that same feeling.

He very much preferred to be alone, and thought it would be wise to disappear before there was any chance of being hampered by a more definite reference to the "housekeeping," or request to stay with Marigold — and then there were other reasons, too.

He was going out sailing, as Marigold had inferred — Renshaw and the new fellows at the hotel. They were going out around the islands, — a longer cruise than usual; and there would be an extra jolly time.

It seemed best, as it had seemed so many times before, to say nothing at home of this engage-

ment. If nobody knew, nobody would be worried. On that account also it was well to be out of reach of any more of Marigold's inconvenient questions.

The habit of concealment was growing on Rod pretty fast; but he could not learn to be comfortable in it. He might argue with himself that he was old enough to use his own judgment, — that women knew nothing about boats, — and that anyway Aunt May had never told him *not* to go out — but he was too honest a boy by nature to be satisfied with this sort of thing, or not to feel mean in doing things he did not wish to have known.

So the new habits (which nevertheless did grow upon him) chafed his conscience, and made him irritable with his little cousins when they were perfectly innocent of any offence.

The difference between the two children showed in this, — that while Mary was grieved by his snubs, Marigold was wroth, and often answered

sharply in kind. So the quarrel of this morning had not been the first occasion of strife.

But if not the first, it was the worst; the previous spats had been trifling in comparison. And when Rod tucked a book into his pocket and strode off down the old abandoned road that led out to Ship Head he was feeling almost as angrily excited as Marigold, and wasted a good deal of trouble in telling himself many times what himself already quite believed — that girls were nuisances!

He was bound for a pleasant place which he had discovered for himself, and where, therefore, he might hope to be entirely private, — a little niche high up on the seaward cliffs of Ship Head, with a beautiful broad outlook over the outlying ledges and the open sea beyond.

It was quite invisible from the shore-path above it, and too far away to be noticed by any one looking shoreward from out on the point of rocks. This fact alone was enough to give it

charm in a boy's eyes, but the difficulty and risk of climbing down to it over the sheer rock-wall completed its fascination.

Rod secretly christened it the Smuggler's Cave, and had spent many pleasant hours reading in the cozy little nook, shaped like a big armchair facing the ocean.

To-day the place had still another advantage. Renshaw and the rest were to bring the yacht around from Long Beach and pick him up at the Cove. From his perch he could see them as they rounded the headland, half a mile away, and would have plenty of time to get down to the landing-place and meet them.

As he settled himself comfortably and opened his book — the hair-raising adventures of some youngster on a whaler in the Arctic — he glanced out and was vexed to see that along the horizon lay a long low bank of pearly white cloud.

That meant fog outside. If it should come in by and by — and it might very likely, for the

wind was "out east" — there would be an end to the island cruise. Provoking!

However, Renshaw had probably set sail by now, — he was just fool enough to start in the face of a fog, — and they could have some fun just running alongshore before the weather could change. So ho! for the gales of the North Atlantic — the floe and the berg and the cold, low-circling sun!

And Marigold — what of her?

Ten minutes after the carriage with mamma and Mary had driven away, the house was empty of Marigold also — empty with a completeness that held no promise of her early return.

Her one conscious purpose had been to get away from Rodney, — out of sight, and hearing, and memory even, — but her unconscious idea was, I think, to escape from her anger itself, as well as from the cause of it.

She longed, even in the midst of the whirling thoughts, which dwelt so persistently on the

quarrel, to be done with wrath, — to come to that quiet after-time, when the fire of anger should have burned itself away, having only a weary calm in its cooling ashes.

She was not wise enough to hasten this time by resolutely turning her thoughts away from the quarrel, and forcing herself to think of pleasanter things instead; but she did the next best thing when, driven by a blind instinct, she sought the most beautiful place she knew, where things outside herself would draw her attention to themselves without her own effort, and give her time to forget, or at least to think more calmly of her troubles.

But as she flew along the shore-path, toward Ship Head, in as desperate a hurry as though she feared to be followed or called back, her cheeks still burned, and her heart throbbed wildly with the misery of resentful thoughts.

How *could* he? He had no right — no right! They had been such good friends until last

week, — she had thought they were real chums, — and now it was all over. She would never forgive him — never! And the same miserable thoughts followed each other around and around, as she stumbled in her blind haste over the rocky path out to her favorite nook, far out on the point of rocks that ran out from the Head — to the "Anemone Pool," where she meant to hide herself from the world.

Both arms were full, and that made it still harder to keep her balance as she sprang from rock to rock, — for even in her excitement she had forgotten none of the things needful or desirable for the solitary hours before her.

It was as though one part of her, quite outside the bitter, angry part, had thought and planned for the comfort and entertainment of that other self, taking care to provide all that could coax her out of her trouble, and make her happy again.

There was the book of fairy stories, if she should cool off enough by and by to want it, — the little pink box of marshmallows, which she would certainly want, cool or not, — her own gaily painted tin pail for collecting treasures, — and above all else, there was the gray shawl, cumbersome to carry, but indispensable for making camp.

"The gray shawl" was really an institution in the family. It was older than mamma herself, and had been her mother's before her. It was an old-fashioned long shawl, heavy and warm and soft, — the most comfortable thing in the world, in spite of faded color and worn-out fringes.

It was by turns a shawl, a tent, a robe, a carpet, the sail of imaginary Viking ships, and the roof of countless playhouses. Mamma often declared she "could not keep house without it," and to the children it was like a dear old friend. With the big clumsy bundle

hugged in both her arms, Marigold could not feel quite unfriended or comfortless.

She made her little camp — still with that queer sense of taking care of the other wretched Marigold — beside the Anemone Pool.

A smooth, sloping rock made a convenient couch on the brink of the little chasm, where one could lie at ease and watch all the pretty things and the interesting doings in its clear, sun-lit depths.

One-half of the gray shawl provided rug and pillow, and the other end sheltered her cozily from that fresh little breeze out of the eastern horizon.

With her face close to the surface of the water, her cloud of brown hair shutting out the reflection of the sky, it was almost as though she were actually down in the Anemone Pool, among all the lovely things that filled it — the swinging brown bubbles of the rock-weed, curtaining dark recesses of the rocks

with its swaying fringes — little, delicate, pink and white coral branches — the green and crimson ribbons of the smaller weeds — green quaker-caps and purple mussels, clinging to the walls — a cross-faced crab sidling along a shelf of rock — and, rarest and most charming of all, the anemones, each with its wreath of exquisite, living fringe, olive and golden and mottled brown, waiting motionless in the still water for the rising tide to bring their food.

But Marigold knew how to wake them up. A shell or pebble dropped skilfully and exactly into the centre of the wreath would do it; the delicate ruffled tissues would begin at once to waver and curl slowly inward to enfold the intruding object, lest, mayhap, it should prove to be an unexpected dinner.

It was a fascinating game to play, because it was so difficult to drop the pebble or periwinkle exactly into the open mouth. They were apt to wobble or twist as they sank through

the water, and twice out of three times would miss the anemone altogether.

As Marigold hung over them, concentrating her whole mind upon the business, the frowning gloom on her face was lighting little by little into a much more natural and pleasant expression of intent interest.

When she was tired of lying still, she took her little pail and started off to fill it with the pretty little snail-like shells which Ellen, the English maid, had taught the children to call periwinkles.

They dotted the rocks by hundreds, clinging to the wet, dark walls and crevices behind the wet masses of rockweed; and one of the little girl's favorite occupations was to hunt for the prettiest stripes and brightest colors among them, — pale yellow, orange, purple, and creamy white. There was no end to their variations.

Marigold had a special object in gathering them, and she worked diligently to fill her pail;

for they were intended (properly boiled and cleaned) as gifts to Maggie Ready and Nellie Donovan, along with the rest of the treasure-trove saved up for the great day of that first return to McGowan's Lane.

The pleasant business of filling the pail kept her busy and contented for a good while, perching and peering among the rocks, as quick and alert as some little beach bird hunting for its food.

Up in his eyric on the cliff, Rodney, glancing up from his book, caught sight of a distant flutter of bright colors, and frowned impatiently as he recognized them.

The pale blue spot,— that was the frock Marigold had worn at luncheon-time. The blot of white above it must be her warm little knitted sweater; and above this again was a gleam of light which a painter might have touched in with a dab of burnt sienna, and which could be nothing but Marigold's curly mop of copper-

brown hair. It was almost too far away to see it at all, but Rodney's eyes were keen.

They were rather sulky, too, as he dropped them on his book again and sternly turned his shoulder from the far-away flutter of blue and white.

"Little fool!" he muttered. "She's no business out there alone, with the tide rising. But she can look out for herself; she's plenty well able to take care of her own affairs — and other people's, too!"

Of course this reasoning did not satisfy his conscience — it merely gratified his temper. He knew perfectly well that if Marigold was careless of her own safety he had to look out for her, and that he was going to do it. But this knowledge only made him "madder" than before, and he buried himself again in his story, fervently hoping that the little fool would come to her senses before it should become necessary for him to sacrifice his dignity by going to warn her.

At least he would put it off as long as possible. There was plenty of time yet before the tide would rise high enough to cover her path to the shore; and a little scare would do her good, anyhow!

So he read on, glancing up occasionally to see where she was, and trying hard not to feel uncomfortable about her. What a plague girls were!

CHAPTER XII.

It was true enough that Marigold had no business to be out there alone.

Such a thing had never happened before; and if the idea had entered any one's head that one of the inseparable "twins" would go so far without the other, of course it would have been forbidden.

But this was a day when a good many things were happening that never happened before; and everybody was likely to be surprised before it ended.

Rodney's turn was coming next.

When she had had enough of shell hunting for the time, Marigold returned to her shawl-nest by the pool.

Rod saw the blue and white speck in the

distance drop down and suddenly become invisible — for the gray shawl was almost the color of the rocks around it — then, satisfied that he knew where to find her when the time came, he began to give more attention to his wild arctic adventures.

His boat had just been crunched like a peanut shell between the jaws of a terrific fighting whale, and he was struggling, the wounded second mate in one arm, to climb the huge, slippery side of the dying monster.

This was naturally an absorbing business, and for a long time he forgot to raise his eyes to note the rise of the tide.

But suddenly, in the midst of the whale's last flurry, something — perhaps the increasing dampness and chill in the air, or the slight dimness creeping over the sun — made him look up as he turned a leaf.

Long afterward Rodney found "Chasing the Bowhead" lying face downward among the rocks

half-way down the cliff, its covers warped and blistered, and its crumpled pages sodden into a solid mass by many easterlies and sea-turns.

But almost before it struck the ground he too was half-way down the cliff, jumping and scrambling by short cuts which he never before had imagined possible. All his lofty dignity and reluctance to go call Marigold had disappeared; he was in frantic haste to reach her.

Already, between him and the rock where she lay, thin, faint, almost invisible wisps of white mist were stealing. They stole across the sky, too, and made the sunlight pale and chill. The fog was coming in!

One could see hardly a hundred yards of water outside the point. It grew dim and vanished into the whiteness, yard by yard, with terrible swiftness. Where were her eyes, not to see it?

She was still lying serenely intent on whatever it was she was doing, evidently quite unconscious of either of the dangers that were creeping toward

her. Rodney shouted her name and plunged recklessly over rocks and weed in an agony of haste.

Meanwhile, Marigold had grown quite tranquil and oblivious of all troubles, past or present.

It would seem that her instinct had chosen the best cure for her disturbed mind. The great peaceful solitude, the beauty of everything, great and small, around her, and the wonderful interest, which never failed, in the tiniest forms of life and movement, had soothed her wild wrath and wretchedness to sleep. She forgot Rodney and his offences, forgot the whole world beside, and saw and felt and thought only of that brimming pool of liquid crystal and the living wonders in it.

She had teased the anemones until she really felt a little ashamed of bothering them so for her own pleasure. Her regrets came too late, however, — she had shut them all up, and now each anemone was hunched into a sulky lump of

leathery green or brown, vainly trying to digest his periwinkle; while the crab, who was not of an amiable or sociable disposition even at his best, had long since backed himself in high dudgeon into a deep cranny, whence she had no stick long enough to poke him out.

So now she had turned her attention to another daily marvel, which never lost its charm for her, and was watching the barnacles "wake up for dinner," as the tide rose. It was running into the pool by now, and tier after tier, as the cold pure flood rushed over them at each wave, they opened their "covers" (as Marigold called the little shell-valves that topped each barnacle) and pushed out the exquisite, delicate, little black feathers, turning all together as the wave passed by, then softly closing like the fingers of a hand, and curling inward and downward to carry the invisible food into the shell.

Marigold's little nose was within an inch of the water; sky and sea alike were shut out from

"HERE CAME THE ARCH OFFENDER, RODNEY."

her sight; and she did not notice that the weed-fringed corners of her fairy-land were darkening ever so little.

But suddenly, in the midst of this peaceful "nature study," she was shocked back to a sense of her surroundings by the wild shout of "Marigold! *Mari*gold!" — and as she lifted her head, a little dizzy and confused from stooping, here came the arch-offender, Rodney, with whom she had parted in such furious rage an hour or two ago, rushing down upon her over the rocks!

He seized her by the arm and pulled her to her feet with one hand, catching up the gray shawl with the other. "Come quick! Are you crazy? The fog — the tide!" he panted, breathless.

Then she saw!

She had been cautioned and instructed and exhorted too often against the danger of ever forgetting the tide, while at play, not to recognize *that* peril with instant panic; but the other,

the swift-stealing fog, she did not for the first moment understand.

In conscience-stricken haste she snatched up her book and the precious pail of shells, and let Rodney pull her along toward the shore.

The first few yards were easy — the girl was as alert and sure-footed as the boy, and they sprang from rock to rock, steadied by each other's hands, while Rod counted each foot gained with anxious eyes.

The tide was not yet high enough to cut them off from shore — had that been all, his delay would not have been too long.

But the still, white cloud came creeping on. Thin veils of it were sweeping between them and the cliffs, and every moment the safe and friendly dry land loomed fainter and farther away.

"If it gets too thick — before we reach the red rocks — we must give it up. We can't — make it!" Rodney panted.

"Give it *up?* — and *drown?*" gasped Mari-

gold. The gasp would have been a wail if she had had enough breath left.

"No, of course not!" He clutched her sharply as her foot slipped. "But if we can't *see*, we'll lose our way, — don't you understand? And we've *got no time* to lose it! We'll head for the Castle — nearer than the shore. It's our best chance."

It was the only chance! In a moment more the cliffs had vanished — blotted out, together with the whole solid world of terra firma. They two, and the fog, and the wet rocks and weed beneath their feet — these were all that existed now!

But they knew the Castle Rock was not far away; and the path to it, by the red rocks and the granite ledge, and all the other well-known landmarks, was plainly marked, and so familiar to them both that they sped over it more by instinct than by sight. Soon their feet were on dry rocks above the level of the treacherous weed, and only a sharp scramble up the rough

"staircase" lay between them and safety on a broad ledge which they called "the Knights' Hall" of the Castle.

Only a dozen feet, perhaps, — but that is plenty of space for the "slip 'twixt cup and lip."

It was Rodney who made it. Probably his shoes were slippery from the wet jelly-weed over which they had come. At any rate, as he poised himself to pitch the rolled-up shawl up to a half-way point, the slip came. He half-recovered, slipped again, caught vainly at Marigold's quickly outstretched hand, and then to her amazement he suddenly crumpled up and went down in a heap, and stayed there!

The lofty and superior Rodney, coming so magnanimously to the rescue of the foolish, helpless girl, who hadn't sense enough to look out for herself, — there he sat, limp and useless, grasping his foot with both hands, and biting his lips till they were white, to keep back the groans of pain.

And the foolish and helpless one, the distressed damsel, whom he was supposed to be rescuing? She was kneeling beside him, her strong little arms around him to help him up, pouring out her anxious questions. Was it his foot or his ankle? Was it so dreadfully bad? Oh, it couldn't be *broken*, could it?

As he looked around him and realized this last, worst scrape of all, I think that neither the pain nor the danger were so bitter to Rodney in that moment as the humiliation of defeat.

"I don't know — and I don't care!" he responded between clenched teeth to her last inquiry. "It's done for, — that's all I know." His own mind was balancing the pleasant alternatives of sprain and dislocation. It hurt enough for either.

"You go on — you can't stay here — the water'll be here in a jiffy — go on up; I'll come as soon as I can move!" he ordered disjointedly, between silent spasms of pain.

Go on up! If he had said "Fly ashore," Marigold would have been quite as likely to obey him. She was a gallant little lass, and the idea of deserting a helpless comrade to save herself appealed to her very much as it would to a manly boy of Rod's own age.

She waited silently for a few moments, her strong, helpful grasp still around his shoulders. Then she spoke, very quietly:

"I *think* that last wave came a little higher, Rod. Do you believe, if you turn 'round, you could creep on your hands and knees, just to that first step?"

The question of leaving him was simply not worth discussing; she ignored it.

He recognized the chivalry of her spirit, and accepted it without more words. He recognized, too, that it made the strongest call upon him for all the courage he could muster; for he could not keep her waiting there while he nursed his hurt, and the water rose inch by inch.

So he shut his teeth tighter still, and the long and painful journey of three yards was accomplished as she had suggested, on hands and knees.

But then came the climb up the ragged cleft formed by the wearing away of some softer vein in the basalt, and dignified by the children with the title of "the Grand Staircase."

In his ordinary mode of progress, it took Rodney about ten seconds to mount it, but to-day, with all the help Marigold's strength could give, it was nearer ten minutes; and when half-way up he gave out entirely, sat himself down, and announced his determination to meet his fate then and there — she could do as she pleased.

Her only answer was to laugh, and set her slender little shoulder under his arm, as she perched below him — and with a sigh of resignation he submitted to be saved in spite of himself.

When they reached the Knights' Hall at last, and sank on the floor, to rest and pant for breath, Rodney was pale and faint with suffering, and Marigold deeply flushed by her exertions. She had really borne almost half his weight.

But she only rested for a moment; then she was up again, anxiously watching the waves, breaking and boiling now around the base of the great, isolated pyramid of rock.

"Do you s'pose we are all right here?" she asked doubtfully, after a few minutes' silence. She had just felt a fleck of spray on her cheek; and yet how she hated to make him move again!

Rodney, however, knew as well as she that their refuge could be only a temporary one. In this light breeze the waves were not likely to reach them, even at full tide, but the floods of spray shooting straight up from the sheer wall of rock below them, as each wave struck, would be almost as bad.

Up higher, nearly to the turrets of the castle,

was another smaller nook, known as the "Lady's Bower," which faced southeast and was shielded from the wind by a huge parapet on the weather side.

Up there — if only Rodney could get so far! — they would be not only safe, but warm and sheltered, compared to their present perch, facing the spray and the northeast wind.

And comfort was a consideration, almost as much as safety; for there was a long afternoon before them.

They were both thinking of that, when Marigold asked, "How long before the tide turns?" and Rod looked at his watch and answered, "Two hours yet."

"And twice two is four!" she sighed.

There was no denying it. Rodney responded only by echoing her sigh.

But then he pulled himself together.

"Well, come along," he said, grimly. "It's no worse one time than another. Here's your

shawl, — do drop that pail! What's the use of bothering with that?"

She made no answer, but she set the little pail carefully in a niche high out of harm's way, before she gave him her arm for the first of the difficult steps which led up and around the castle wall.

It was a hard test for the boy's fortitude, that last dozen feet. When the Bower was reached, he flung himself at full length on the rock floor, quite spent with the pain of his injury, and lay so for a little while, staring silently into the fog, with clenched teeth, till the pain should subside a little.

Presently he felt light touches on his ankle and turned to find Marigold unlacing his boot.

Of course he protested, sat up, and did it himself, and the immediate relief that followed made him very willing to submit meekly to the further ministrations of his little nurse.

CHAPTER XIII.

"We must bind it up nice and smooth, and then keep it wet and cool," she said confidently; but her eyes were wandering in some perplexity over her frock in search of something detachable for a bandage. Then her glance fell on Rod's long tie, and she pounced on it without ceremony.

With the fold opened out it answered the purpose very nicely; and to moisten it with water from the nearest pool of spray was an easy matter.

Next, her patient attended to, Marigold set about making them both as comfortable as the case would allow.

The Bower was quite a snug little place, with an almost level floor, and well sheltered on three sides from wind and spray by its high battlements

of solid rock; but these could not keep out the fog, which folded them in, denser and colder every minute.

But Marigold was a true little woman, with all the woman's instinct for making homelike any spot on earth where she happened to find herself; and she made her little arrangements with swift decision, neither consulting Rodney's wishes nor asking his consent.

First she shook out the gray shawl to its full length and draped it over her head. Next she curled herself down beside him as he lay, leaned back comfortably against the rock wall behind her, and lifted his head into her lap; and then in another moment Rodney found himself tucked all around with the warm soft folds of the old shawl, his head nicely pillowed, and surrounded by a sudden twilight.

One narrow peep-hole between the folds of the shawl let in a little light, and not much fog; and there they were, shut into a cosy little tent, warm

and dry, with all the cold and loneliness of dreary sky and sullen sea shut out.

"Now we are all comfy, aren't we?" purred Marigold, contented.

He did not answer, except by a vague murmur. Rodney was thinking; and his thoughts were fast getting too much for him. It would not have been quite easy to speak at that moment.

He was lying with his face turned away so that Marigold could not see it; and he lay so still that she began to hope he might go to sleep if she kept quiet.

But by and by she became aware that, whether he was asleep or not, her foot was; and in changing her position to relieve it, she slipped one hand under Rod's cheek to lift his head.

And then she stopped and sat motionless, staring down at the rough, dark curls in her lap with an astonishment that was almost fright. The cheek was wet!

Rodney! — big, handsome, masterful Rod, who

lorded it over the little cousins, and whom, in spite of his faults, they looked up to and admired so ardently — Rodney, crying!

The shock of the discovery made Marigold's heart give a sudden great thump, and then a slow hard squeeze that took her breath away.

She had almost cried out in the first surprise of it, but checked herself in time, and bent over him very gently, speaking almost in a whisper.

"What is it, Rod? Does the poor foot ache so dreadfully?" she murmured.

"Oh, no, — it isn't that, — it's everything, all together!" he choked out; and then, his self-control lost in the effort of speaking, he broke down completely, — flung himself over, burying his face in the hospitable lap, and sobbed outright.

Everything all together — I suppose that was just it. Fifteen-year-old manly dignity doesn't break down and cry for mere pain alone, though it was severe and he was tired out with bearing it

silently. But, as I said, Rodney had been doing some pretty serious thinking as he lay so still there, staring into the fog.

Having your own way was not the happiest way of spending a summer after all. In fact, for many days past it had been constant discomfort instead — sometimes sheer misery; for Rod was too much a gentleman at heart not to see plainly that his own way was not the way of a gentleman; and the little concealments and deceits had each left a sore spot like a burn on his conscience and his self-respect.

He had defied the discomfort and tried to forget it, — but still it was there, at the back of his mind.

It had made him "touchy" and cross with the little girl cousins of whom he was really fond, and made him actually avoid the sweet aunt whom he dearly loved. And the realization of all these things came over him with a rush as he had to face the knowledge that to-day it had lain at the

bottom of that unjust anger with Marigold which had so nearly cost her life!

And yet, after it all, how generous she had been! How readily and freely she had met him more than half-way, forgetting her own perfectly just resentment and wounded pride, — thinking only how to help and care for him.

They were bitter facts to face, but Rod was an honest boy, after all, and he faced them honestly, as he lay biting his lips and staring into the fog, while in spite of all his effort the silent tears came faster and faster.

Perhaps he would still have got the better of them if Marigold had not found him out — for I think it was the kind, comforting little hand that pressed his cheek, and the pitying murmur of her voice that laid the last straw's weight on the burden of his self-reproach, and made it too heavy to bear.

The sobs *would* come, smother them as he might. So he lay, nearly smothering himself as

well, while Marigold, after her first moment of scared surprise, patted and smoothed the tumbled locks, and cooed soothingly over him as if he had been a baby. The "little mother" habit was still strong in her.

After awhile the sobs ceased, — Rod was getting hold of himself again. Then the long, broken breaths grew steady, and perfect silence followed.

Neither of them knew how to break it. Rodney, of course, was sunk in the deepest depths of mortification and disgust at his weakness, and considering painfully how he was ever to lift his head from that friendly shelter and look Marigold in the face again.

He wished she would say something, — anything, — she could usually talk fast enough.

Presently, however, the difficulty settled itself; for as a restless movement of his head brought one tanned cheek into sight, the kind little hand that stroked his hair slipped down and softly,

almost timidly, stroked the cheek instead. And then, very quickly, and to his own surprise, a bigger, browner hand went up and closed tight for a moment over the small one.

After that there seemed to be no need of beginning with anything special — the beginning had been made; and when he did speak it was quite easy to say the thing that came uppermost in his thoughts.

"I don't see what makes a little thing like you seem so much like a mother, — to a fellow twice her size!"

Marigold meditated. "Perhaps it's because I *feel* like one," she said, at last. "Down there, you seem just like Baby Joe."

Her voice changed slightly on the last words.

Nobody knew how much Marigold had missed Baby Joe. Not even twin Mary, sleeping beside her, and watching her with anxious fondness, had guessed at the tears that sometimes slipped down her cheek into the pillow when she woke

and missed the warm, heavy, little bedfellow that had snuggled up beside her a year ago.

She had not cried for Larry Murray, nor for Johnnie and Tim. They were stepbrothers, and the step in their case was a pretty long one.

But there is no such thing as a step-baby. A baby is just a baby; and when he looks to you quite as much as to his mother for all his little wants and amusements, you simply have to love him, step or not, and no matter how heavy he is to lug about.

The pain of missing him had worn away as the busy, happy months went by in her new home — but still when she thought of him there was a little pull at her heart.

But she was brave, and resolutely pushed the thought away from her. This was not the time to be missing little Joe: it was Rodney who needed her just now.

He, meantime, was bracing himself (as Mari-

gold had done that morning) to a very difficult and unpleasant duty. When a gentleman has put himself in the wrong he should apologize; but if the gentleman is only fifteen the apology comes hard.

But it did come, — a little abrupt and awkward with the effort of getting it out at all.

"Say, Marigold, — you know what you said — when you got mad this morning — that I was up to something I was ashamed of — "

"M-h-m?" she assented, questioning and reassuring at once.

"Well, you were all right! That is — you know — " It was the hardest thing in the world for a boy to say, but Rod had good grit, and he blundered on. "The thing I was up to then — maybe I wasn't ashamed of it, but I ought to have been, — and I *am now!*"

The apology was out at last, and both of them felt relieved. Marigold hastened to meet his handsome acknowledgment half-way.

"Yes, but I *wasn't* all right — I was horrid, too," she said, eagerly. "I needn't have got so mad. If I guessed something else was bothering you, I ought — "

"No, you oughtn't," persisted Rod, chivalrously anxious, now he was about it, to shoulder all the blame. "No girl with any spunk would let a fellow speak to her like that; and no fellow that wasn't a chump would do it!"

For a moment Marigold was silent. Her generous heart would gladly have spared him this self-abasement, but as she was too right-minded not to agree with him, and too honest to pretend she didn't, there seemed to be nothing pleasant that she *could* say.

But she went on thinking, and when she spoke it was right out of the middle of a thought.

"But see here, Rod, — don't you think we have sort of got into a habit, lately, of getting mad easier? I know *I* do. If we go on we sha'n't be friends at all. S'pose we make a bar-

gain now, not to squabble any more, no matter *how* each other acts."

"All right — let's not!" Rod agreed; and the bargain was signed and sealed on the spot by a hearty squeeze of hands.

After that, Rod began to feel more cheerful. His self-respect was restored and he could feel himself a gentleman once more, now that he had made honorable amends.

He remained quiet for a little, enjoying the feeling of the caressing hand among his curls, and presently he murmured, his voice muffled in the folds of her skirt, "You 'cuddle' a fellow as if he were a Maltese kitten!"

She leaned over and smiled down into the half-hidden face. "*Kittens like* to be cuddled," she said, suggestively.

There was a pause; then — "I guess," said the muffled voice, in the reluctant tone of a confession, "*every* fellow *has* times when he'd like a little of it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

For a long time then they were both silent.

Marigold sat, her chin resting in one hand, while the other went gently and steadily to and fro over the rough, dark hair, and gazing out absently into the white folds of the fog.

She was thinking of Aunt Adelaide — pleasant, brisk, decisive, as she always saw her — and trying to imagine her "cuddling" anything or anybody; kittens, or big, masterful, troublesome boys.

She could not do it; and after long and serious pondering she gave it up, and decided positively that the two ideas of Aunt Adelaide and petting simply would not go together.

(She was right, in this. Rodney had not had so much petting since he was a baby as in this afternoon. No doubt that fact was a part of the

"everything all together" that had upset him so.)

He was so still she again fancied him asleep until he surprised her by a sudden chuckle.

"It's rather a joke on me, anyway," he explained. "All the row was about nothing, after all — for of course they didn't start. Great time we'd have had on the yacht in this weather."

"The yacht?" she echoed, puzzled. She had quite forgotten it. And then the whole story came out.

He made it a short one, and as matter-of-fact as possible; for by this time he was feeling a natural reaction from the unaccustomed emotions of the afternoon; and Marigold listened very quietly, too.

But, open and true as her own nature was, she could not help feeling shocked; and Rodney winced as her honest eyes said so in spite of her silent lips. The story sounded bad enough to himself, — and seeing how it sounded to her made

it worse; so bad indeed that at the end he began to explain and defend himself a little — though she had said not a word of blame.

He did honestly feel it a hardship that he should be deprived of all the pleasures of yachting, to save his aunt from what seemed to him such unreasonable worry; and he tried to make Marigold see it in that light also. If Aunt May would only get over that prejudice of hers, and not be so nervous —

But at that point Marigold cut him short, rushing to mamma's defence with all her characteristic impetuosity.

"You don't know anything about it, Rod! When a person is *really* nervous about anything, like mamma about our getting drowned, she just *can't* help it, any more than — why, than *you* could, just now, when *you* were nervous!"

She felt that it was a little ungenerous to bring that up again, — but the lightest breath of a hint that Mamma Merington could be unreasonable,

or anything less than absolute perfection, was a treason that must be crushed instantly, with the first and heaviest weapon at hand. It sufficed.

"Nervous — you call that being nervous?" said Rod, reflectively. "I call it making a fool of myself. But I don't know that I'm sorry now — You're a good fellow, Marigold!"

"Why, of course it was!" she put in, hastily, ignoring the irrelevant end of his speech. "You didn't know what you were doing it for, and you didn't want to do it, and you couldn't *help* doing it to save your life! That's being nervous."

"Is it? Well, we'll let it go at that, — only I hope I shan't get nervous again in a hurry!

"Say, Marigold, I believe it's getting lighter."

She saw that he wanted to get away from the subject, and she turned willingly to peer through the fog, which certainly did seem a little thinner. Black points of the outer ledges which had been quite invisible would loom faintly for a moment through the mist, only to vanish in a white

smother of breaking surf, and then white and black would both be lost again in a denser drift of fog.

Suddenly Marigold clutched Rodney's arm with a startled cry.

"Look — look! A boat! What can it be doing there?"

Rodney sat up and strained his eyes to follow her pointing finger; but the fog had closed in again.

He waited and watched in terror — for he understood the danger far better than she. A boat in here, among these rocks!

Presently came another sudden rift in the cloud, and, like a vision of some ghostly thing, they saw the boat!

Those on board must have lost their senses in utter panic, for there, close upon the roaring surf, her sails were up, and she was still moving slowly in the light breeze farther and farther into the dreadful danger.

It was the *Siren* — Renshaw's boat! Rod knew her instantly by the whiteness of the new jib.

He struggled to his feet, reckless of pain and weakness, and screamed a frantic warning, waving them back with both arms. "Go about! You're on the Ledges! — the Ledges!" he yelled.

For a moment longer they saw the yacht, and there was some confused movement among the black shadows which manned her, but what they were doing could not be made out; and then the curtain of fog came down again and hid them.

Had they seen him? Impossible to tell! They could not have heard — the noise of the acres of broken water around them was one deep continuous roar, with none of the cadence of the waves upon a beach. No human voice could have carried half the distance.

But at least they must have seen the loom of the Castle Rock, if not the black figures on

it. Had they gone about — or were they all quite mad?

The two on the rock waited in an agony of suspense for the next break in the fog. It came, clearer than before; the wind was surely changing. Now! There she is — there, to the left, — don't you see?

She was about where they had seen her last, but now her head was to the wind, and the sails were down. She was actually anchored — and within a dozen fathoms of the outmost ledge!

"'Fools' luck!'" muttered Rodney, as he dropped, faint with mingled relief and pain, on the rock again. "Pretty place to drop anchor as they could have picked out on the whole Atlantic coast!"

He watched for another glimpse, and after he had assured himself of their present safety, "I hope they've got some grub aboard," he remarked, grimly, "for they are going to be late to dinner."

"Yes, and so are we!" sighed Marigold.

It was a fact of which she had been keenly conscious for some time, though she would not complain. But since Rod had introduced the subject — "And I am so hungry now, I feel as if I could eat seaweed!" she confessed. "If only the old tide would hurry up and fall! Or if we only had a fire to cook with!"

"We have got a fire. If we only had some dinner to cook with it, is the trouble," returned Rod, morosely.

"But *I've* got the *dinner!*" cried Marigold, suddenly eager. "Where's your fire?"

"Where's your dinner?" he parried.

"You show me the fire, and I'll show you the dinner!" declared Marigold, both hands behind her, her face all mischief and sparkle. The chance for any sort of activity after their long and tedious stillness roused her at once to her usual exuberance of spirits.

Rodney gravely produced a box of matches.

Marigold was too innocent to guess, as Dick Saunders had done, that a box of matches in one pocket implied a box of cigarettes in another; but Rod's face burned as he turned it from her and began to search the crevices of the rock within reach for bits of driftwood.

Marigold sprang up to help him, and when her back was turned, he hastily pulled out the little box and pitched it far out into the fog. And as he did it, he made a very solemn promise to himself not to do another thing this summer that he had to hide from Aunt May and the girls!

Getting nervous isn't a bad thing sometimes.

Marigold noticed nothing; she was absorbed in the search for fuel. Everything within touch of the fog, of course, was hopelessly damp; but under the topmost layer of straw and dried seaweed were plenty of chips and fine stuff, dry and ready for use.

Rodney's experienced eye selected a suitable

niche within easy reach as he lay, with a deep crevice above it forming a natural chimney; and by the time Marigold returned from her explorations and dropped an armful of nice dry bits beside him, he had started a tiny crackling red flame and a great cloud of thick white smoke under his little pile of straw and splinters.

For a few minutes it seemed a choice, as Rod said, between staying there and being choked and jumping off and being drowned; but soon the draught was started, and the smoke drew up the chimney as it ought, while the tiny flame grew big and strong and snapped noisily.

"There she goes!" said Rod with the deep, well-earned satisfaction of the man who has made a fire burn. "Now bring on your soup and fish and roast beef!"

She brought them promptly — in the shape of the little tin pail which she had guarded so carefully in their flight to the Castle. Rod had

not thought of it afterward, but she had, and here it was.

She held it out silently, waiting with pleased expectancy for his cry of joy and surprise.

The surprise came: the joy did not.

"*Snails!*" said Rod; and in that one word was such a world of disappointment and disgust that Marigold was quite overcome.

She clasped the little pail in both arms, threw back her head, and laughed, — that laugh of Marigold's that always set other people laughing, too, whether they saw the joke or not.

"They are not snails," she protested, at last; "they are periwinkles, and they are good to eat! They are lovely when they are hot!"

"Oh, they are! Well, they don't look it. Chew 'em right up, do you?" queried the skeptical one.

"Do you chew up clam-shells?" she retorted, scornfully, as she knelt beside him, and emptied out her store upon the smooth, flat rock.

The pail was of a businesslike size, and it was brimful. For any one who liked periwinkles, the prospect of dinner was certainly brightening.

Now Marigold, with her empty pail, crept cautiously down the rock toward the highest of the spray-filled pools; and, clinging, leaning, balancing dextrously, while Rodney watched her in helpless anxiety, at last by a sort of swallow's dip she filled the pail and fled up the rocks just in time to escape a falling torrent of spray.

"There!" she said, breathless but triumphant, dropping to her knees again by his side, and leaning to adjust the pail over the fire. "Now we make the water boil — and then we pop them in — and *then* — "

"You eat 'em!" he finished for her, with marked emphasis on the pronoun.

She thrust out her chin and made a quick little face at him. "We'll see!" was all she said.

"RODNEY RESTING ON ONE ELBOW, FED THE FIRE WITH LITTLE CHIPS."

Together they balanced their little camp-kettle, and braced it firmly with pieces of rock, and then Rodney, resting on one elbow, patiently fed the fire with little sticks and chips, Marigold looking on in rapt content, while the water first hissed, then purred, and at last bubbled cheerily, — but still his face wore a look of deep distrust.

In went the "winkles" by handfuls, with a hiss and rush of steam. The gay paint on the little pail blistered and blackened in the flame; the fire snapped and roared softly.

Presently Rodney began to sniff the air with a perceptible increase of interest. "I say," he remarked, "I hope they taste the way they smell!" and Marigold smiled wisely.

A minute later she fished the hot pail skilfully off the fire, by means of a stick in each hand, and poured off the water. Then she set the dish before him, curled herself up comfortably at his head as he lay stretched before the blaze, and dinner was served.

One big pin did duty for knives, forks, and spoons, and in a twinkling she had extracted the tiny spiral coil of meat, and presented it, on the point of the pin, to Rodney's doubtful lips.

If you never ate a periwinkle I am afraid I cannot give you any better description of the flavor than Rod's. "It's like clams — and it isn't!" he pronounced, after carefully considering his first morsel; but he opened his mouth very readily for the second.

And Marigold was so charmed by his approval, and her mother-bird instinct so satisfied with the pleasure of feeding him, that she forgot all about herself until he asked suspiciously: "Aren't you going to eat any yourself — or are you 'trying it on the dog?'"

Marigold laughed, and after that he had to find a pin for himself. The dinner had passed the experimental stage.

Of course I am not saying, you know, that periwinkles would be a delicacy *if* you could get

oysters or scallops instead; but if you can't — and if you are very hungry —

And then, Rod and Marigold were very young. Neither of them had quite outgrown the omnivorous age that eats violets and "cheeses" and blueberry blossoms and fern sprouts, and anything in the world that is eatable.

The really natural youngster will eat whatever is not actually deadly; at least he is willing to try it. When a well-trained child brings a new kind of berry for his mother's inspection, asking eagerly, "Is this good to eat?" he does not mean, at all, "Does it taste good?" or "Is there any possible reason for eating it?" but, simply, "Will it do me any serious damage if I do eat it?"

So Rodney and Marigold ate their "snails," and enjoyed them, too.

It was not a very substantial dinner, perhaps, and it took a long time to get a very little food; but why not? There was plenty of time, —

more than plenty, — and sitting there cosily before the warm little blaze, coaxing the tiny savory morsels from the pretty shells, was as good a way of spending it as could have been devised.

"This is rather jolly after all, don't you think?" remarked Rod, dreamily; and Marigold answered with a sort of surprise, "Why, yes, we are having a lovely time, aren't we?"

CHAPTER XV.

But when the pail was empty and there was nothing more to do to amuse themselves, Rodney began to watch the slowly falling tide, and to look at his watch pretty often.

The tide had turned, — the wind had changed, — the fog was breaking up and drifting back to sea. But soon the time would come when they *must* begin their difficult journey homeward, — for it was not long to sunset. Was the fog going fast enough? Would it be clear before dark?

If Marigold shared his thoughts she gave no sign of it. She fed the fire from her thrifty little woodpile, and watched the flames in apparent content; but I suspect her quick little side glances at the water from time to time meant something, — only she was determined not to worry Rod any

more than need be. What good would it do to talk about it?

At last he shut his watch with a snap of decision. "Well, we might as well start now as any time," he said, with careful carelessness; and Marigold, with a cheerful "All right!" jumped up quickly and began to fold the gray shawl, while he grimly devoted himself to the ordeal of getting on his shoe.

If climbing to the Bower had been difficult, getting down again was not much easier; and the distance between the Castle and the foot of the shore-path, over the rough ledges and boulders and slippery rockweed, was slow and painful to the last degree.

If it had been an actual sprain, Rod probably could not have managed it at all. Even as it was, and though the afternoon's rest had helped the twisted ankle a good deal, the little journey demanded more fortitude than anything he had ever done before in his life; but at last, with Mari-

gold's solicitous help, and with many stops for rest, it was accomplished, and before the crimson sun sank into the pine woods, the little pair of adventurers were sitting, very tired and discouraged, on the stile which led from the cliff-pastures into the old road to the village.

It was a route quite unused since the new road and bridge were built, save by strolling "summer folks," so they had no hope of rescue here. But suddenly, while they debated whether Marigold should leave him and hurry down to the nearest houses of the Cove for help, a huge shape clad in yellow oilskins bore down on them, and a friendly hail reached their ears above all the noise of wind and surf.

As he came nearer Marigold recognized Amos Starrett, Jennie's father.

"Oh, Mr. Starrett!" she shrieked, almost hysterical with the sudden relief, and rushed to meet him. "Were you coming for us? How did you know?"

"Haow'd I know?" Amos Starrett repeated, with genial sarcasm. "Well, I guess you'll find it's pütty gen'rally known. We got ha'f the men in the Cove out looking for you two young ones — 'nd a little more 'n' we'd 'v' had out the other ha'f. Your folks are abaout wild."

"Oh!" faltered Marigold in distress, — "mamma — "

"No, yer mother ain't home," Mr. Starrett explained, and she gave a sigh of relief. "But Andrews, he come down t' my place, abaout time the fog come in, and he was some worked up. He — Hello, young feller," he broke off, as they reached Rodney on the stile, "what's the matter with you? You look kind of slim."

It did not take long to tell; and Mr. Starrett's measures were as quickly taken. Before Rod could protest he found himself picked up and carried like a child along a rough path across lots in the direction of George Bourne's barn, — "the handiest place to get a team," their rescuer ex-

plained. "No, you can't walk, neither, — and you ain't goin' to! 'Twould take you all night!"

Safe in George Bourne's democrat, and on the way home, Marigold began to ask again why Mr. Starrett had gone out to the Head to find them; and it then appeared that they owed his timely and sorely needed help to Jennie, Marigold's admiring friend.

From the distant road she had seen Marigold running along the shore-path; had followed her to Ship Head, and watched her out on the rocks for some time; too bashful to join her, but satisfied to see her in the distance.

Then Jennie had gone on her way to make a visit to a friend; but when she returned home in the late afternoon and heard the news which filled the Cove village, that two of the Merington children were missing, she at once put the searchers on the right track.

Her father seemed to understand her feeling for Marigold, in his rough way. "She's some

crazy over your sister," he said, addressing Rod. "She's followed her 'round this summer more'n a little. Lucky for you she did, this time, too. Hadn't have been for her, you'd have stood a chance of being late to supper, I guess."

"I'd have been sitting right there on that stile till now!" Rod assented, gratefully, and then he leaned over closer to Marigold and added, under his breath, "So this is your doing, too. Washing other people's dishes pays, after all!"

Well, not the washing dishes alone, Rod; it was just being Marigold that paid.

And Marigold laughed at him with a happy glow at her heart. That Jennie should care for her like that, and that Rod should praise her for it, would have made up for all the troubles and terrors of the day, even if they had not already been turned into pleasures by the new and beautiful "chum"-ship with Rodney himself.

Home at last! Kissed and shaken, and laughed and cried over, by the distracted household, and

hurried off up-stairs to be brushed and dressed and made presentable "before your mamma gets home and sees you so!"

Fortunately the wanderers had arrived just as Andrews was starting to meet the train and bring mamma and Mary home; so he need carry no bad news to terrify them; and he gladly agreed to say nothing and let Rodney and Marigold tell their own story in their own way.

Of course it had to be told; but coming from their own lips, to prove they were *not* lost or drowned, it was not half so alarming.

Still it was a sorry tale to tell, and mamma was so distressed and agitated by it that the two culprits felt more deeply ashamed of their performance, and of the faults of temper and heedlessness which had led to it, than if she had scolded them.

Indeed, it was not necessary to blame them, for they both blamed themselves freely enough; and the uncomfortable consciousness of having shown

themselves unfit to be trusted remained with both for a long time, making them unusually careful.

Especially Rod. The events of that troublous day had made an impression on his mind that was not likely to be soon effaced.

At first his strongest feeling was one of sick distaste for water and boats and all that belonged to them. During those first restless, wakeful nights, when the pain of his wrenched ankle kept him from sleeping, he could think of little else than that terrible picture, framed in the cloud of fog, of the white-winged boat driving, helpless as a storm-beaten bird, straight on the rocks — and death!

It haunted him, even after his anxious inquiries had brought from the hotel the welcome news that the *Siren* and her crew had returned to harbor in the early morning — safe, but very hungry, very tired and wet, and very much disgusted with yachting as a sport.

They had seen Rod, though without recogniz-

ing him, and had understood his signals; but were too confused and demoralized to work the boat, and retrace their course to safety. They could only drop the anchor (by pure "fools' luck," as he had said, in a safe spot) and stay where they were until daylight and clear weather.

So Rodney's resolve to sail no more in the *Siren* was not *all* penitence. And in any case it was hardly needed, for Renshaw also had had enough of that form of recreation, and soon after sent the yacht away.

And more than this the persistent vision did for Rod. It forced on him the painful necessity of owning that not only his conduct, but his superior masculine judgment, had been wrong; for the sudden, awful danger into which the boat had run so unexpectedly proved beyond denial that Aunt May's "nervousness" and "prejudice" were not so unreasonable as he had deemed them.

To be sure, exactly that thing might not have happened — probably would not — had he been

on board; but it illustrated what an incalculable sport sailing is, for novices, and how risks may arise when least foreseen.

It completed the lesson — and Rod's humility. He had no defence left to soften his fall.

He wondered much that his aunt had said nothing to him on the subject. He had fully expected, after his confession, to be forbidden even so much as a punt for the rest of the summer, and was prepared to submit manfully to the just penalty. But it was several days before he heard anything more about it.

Meanwhile Mamma Merington had considered the question carefully, trying to be both wise and just. Her first impulse naturally was to exact strict promises from both the children; but realizing that her own dread of the water was largely "nervous" and to a certain extent "unreasonable," and being very anxious not to be unfair to Rodney, she decided to leave the whole matter to Papa Merington's calmer judgment. For a

few days at least, until he could walk without the help of a stick, there was little danger of Rod's getting himself drowned.

Accordingly, the next time his Uncle Robert paid them a flying visit there were confabulations; and Rodney's interview with his uncle left him feeling somewhat humiliated. His pride had been deeply hurt by reflections on his trustworthiness, — but he knew they were richly deserved.

And to his surprise he found himself almost as much the master of his own actions as before; for the two wise people in whose charge he was were satisfied that there was no danger of his again abusing their faith in him, — he had learned his lesson thoroughly well, — and they preferred to leave him upon his own honor.

For a few days, while he was still tied to the house, or to easy level ground, by his bandaged foot, Rodney was really alarmingly good — he was almost angelic.

The little girls hovered about him, full of sym-

pathy and solicitude, and used all their bright wits in devices for his comfort and amusement. They would have spent their whole time in ministering to him if he had not fairly driven them away sometimes, by pretending to wish to read or sleep. Then they would go cheerfully off to their own neglected pursuits — none of which, however, were so absorbing just then as their frequent conferences upon the pleasant topic of how lovely Rod was now, and how glad they were that Mary had been wrong about boys!

Rodney's reflections were not quite so agreeable. It is true he was pleased and touched to see how happy the children were in having him all to themselves, but the thought always brought with it a twinge of remorse for his previous neglect of them. They were a good deal younger, of course, — and they were girls, — but still, as their guest, he owed them more attention than he had given.

Mamma Merington's unwearying sweetness and kindness, too, added to his self-reproach. Rod-

"LET THEM PET AND SPOIL HIM TO THEIR HEARTS' CONTENT."

ney came to the deliberate conclusion that he had not been a very satisfactory guest, and he resolved to find some way to "make it up" to them all before the summer was over.

At present his only means of giving them pleasure seemed to be to accept their kindness, and to let them pet and spoil him to their hearts' content.

One morning, when they had picked up and restored all the pillows, which would tumble out of the hammock just beyond his reach, and hunted up the magazine he wanted, and put the hand-bell and the lemonade close to his hand, and then had vanished, waving gay farewells, down over the cliff to the beach, Rod lay for some time in the pleasant stillness of the deep, cool, breeze-swept veranda, turning these thoughts over once more in his mind.

They still hurt a little, and when Aunt May came out to bring him a couple of letters he welcomed the diversion.

The letter from his father came first. It was

brief and hasty, as his letters usually were, and merely said he "had talked with the boys' fathers, and had no objections to their plan if Rodney liked to go."

Puzzled and eager, Rod tore open the second envelope. Ah, here was the answer to the puzzle — he caught his breath with delight.

Four of them — all fellows he knew and liked — Lake George for two weeks! *Would* he like to go? Well, rather!

His ankle was improving so fast that in a week more it would be all right, so there would be nothing to prevent —

Rod stopped short!

He had sprung upright in the hammock (losing out the blue pillow as he did so), to shout to Aunt May; but at that sudden second thought the eager look vanished from his face, as though a cloud had passed over the sun, and he laid himself down again very quietly and shut his eyes, to do some thinking.

Wasn't this just what he had been wishing for, — a chance to "make it up" to Mary and Marigold?

How would he be making it up, if, the moment he got well enough to pay them back for their affectionate care of him, he were to rush off on this camping trip and leave them by themselves? A pretty way of making up, — first neglect and snub 'em, then go off and leave 'em just when they were expecting to have some fun! No, sir!

Hadn't he wished that his uncle and aunt had forbidden him something or other, by way of penalty for his badness? Well, why not punish himself, right now, by giving up this jolly lark? Then, perhaps, he wouldn't feel so mean about those other larks he had had.

The sober look settled into one of steady resolution, and when he opened his eyes his face was bright again.

He would write at once to the boys, and get Andrews to take the letter over to the vil-

lage, quick, before the girls came in, and before he had time to change his mind.

He sprang up in haste, paying little heed to the still weak ankle; and when his aunt came out a little later with a plate of fruit for the invalid, she found *all* of the pillows on the floor, and no trace of the invalid to be seen.

CHAPTER XVI.

RODNEY was very much in earnest about his little sacrifice.

He carried it through, and gave up the camping trip, in spite of his friends' protests and urging; and he did it in the best way, too, — bravely and cheerfully, and without talking about it. Mary and Marigold did not know — in fact they do not know yet — that such an invitation had ever come.

He devoted himself to his secret plan of reparation, of "giving the girls a good time," with the interest and enthusiasm he usually put into his pursuits, making a real art of it. And after all he did not regret the lost lark as much as he had supposed. Mary and Marigold might be only eleven, — and girls at that, — but they

were extremely lively little persons, and they kept him surprisingly busy. His plan succeeded beautifully. The little girls were perfectly happy, and responded so joyfully to his efforts that what was left of the summer flew by on rainbow wings, for all of them.

It was only a pity there was not more of it; and yet, measured according to Mary's philosophy, the time was long.

"A splendid day like this," she said, "makes three days in all. First you plan it,—and then you do it, — and then you have it to think about."

I do not mean to say that Rodney devoted every minute of his time to their service. He wasn't *really* an angel yet, — he was just a "glorious human boy."

He went off with the "other fellows" sometimes, and sometimes he brought them to the house; but they were not necessary to his existence *all* the time now, — he had found too many other ways of having fun.

And even when he was out in the free boy-world, he did not quite forget his girl comrades at home.

From one of these expeditions he brought home the very biggest sea-urchin they had ever seen, and presented it to Marigold, who received it with rapture.

"How perfectly lovely! Thank you *ever* so much, Rod! This will be just the thing for Katie — Katie Donovan, she's the little one. I have something special for all the others, and I couldn't seem to find anything just right for Katie."

Strange to say, Rod was not pleased by this unselfish delight of hers.

The urchin really was an uncommon prize; he had risked a ducking to secure it, — and he had not done it for Katie Donovan.

Perhaps the discomfiture was good for him, though. Without an occasional unconscious snub of this sort he might have got too com-

placent at the success of his "making it up to them." Too much admiration and attention are not wholesome for any one; and Rod *was* just a trifle inclined to be lordly.

The *Bounding Billow* was one of Rod's favorite amusements at this time.

Hearing that one of the Bourne boys was going off to Gloucester, he applied dutifully for his Aunt May's consent to hire his punt and bring it around to the bath-house pier on the little Half Moon Beach. And there, when it had been scrubbed and painted and purified of its fishiness, it made a delightful adjunct to the morning baths.

Under Rod's tutorship and Andrews's faithful guard the children learned to handle it, and soon could row or scull about the safe little shut-in bay almost as well as Rod himself.

They usually wore their bathing-suits on these excursions, and were out of the boat almost as much as in it; and they even invented a "cap-

size drill," which frightened mamma dreadfully when she first saw it. But after getting a little used to it she heartily approved.

The only trouble about it was that the *Bounding Billow* was modelled too closely on the lines of a tea-tray to be coaxed into tipping over without the most prodigious effort and ingenuity.

Next, after reading some Florida story, Rodney was seized with the idea of making a water-telescope, and spent several days working hard over it, with Mary 'n' Mary's eager but bothersome assistance.

First he fashioned a deep, narrow box, some two feet high, of which the bottom was a sheet of thick glass. He puttied and calked the cracks until it was water-tight, and then fastened it on one end of the punt, in such a position as to bring the glass just below the surface of the water. The effect was magical, — to lean over the box and look down while the boat moved slowly and smoothly along was like being a real

mermaid and floating through the wonder-world down there below. The waving kelp and glass-like jellyfish and all the familiar things looked strange and lovely in the still, cold light. There were little fish darting about the rocks, and sleepy flounders creeping over the sand. Why, once Marigold even saw a sculpin! That *was* luck.

One morning the girls were dressing for their bath, while Rodney waited for them in the punt, and mamma was comfortably established on the bench on the shady side of the house, to keep them company.

She sat watching the sturdy young boatman as he fussed over a shaky thole-pin; and when he looked up at her with his sudden bright smile of good-fellowship she smiled back at him and spoke her thought.

"How brown you are, Rod! You would not have got such a splendid coat of tan in Devonshire. Are you quite sure, dear, you have not been sorry you stayed with us instead?"

"Not for a minute, Aunt May!" he declared, emphatically. "I've had ten times the fun here." And then as he looked up at her from the boat, a sudden impulse of gratitude and affection came over him, and almost before he knew it he had told her all about that camping trip to Lake George, which he had meant never to let any one know.

It was worth while telling, after all, just to see the look on Aunt May's face as she said: "You blessed boy! And aren't you sorry for *that*, either?"

He vowed he was not; and then he begged her not to tell the girls, — he didn't want any fuss. And she understood at once, in her comfortable way, and promised to keep his secret.

"And now, Rod, *I* am going to make a confession, in return for yours," she said; and she laughed and looked at him roguishly. (Aunt May was so pretty!) She glanced over her

shoulder at the bath-house, and lowered her voice mysteriously.

"I have been thinking — and I have decided that I am a goose to be so nervous about the water, and I must get over it! So if any one should invite me to go out — on a *very* still day, when the water is *very* smooth — I mean to accept the invitation."

The invitation was not long in coming, — it came with a rush that nearly upset her as Rod swarmed up on to the platform.

A few minutes later, when Mary and Marigold ran out, ready for their bath, they stopped short and stared out at the boat as astonished as though the "real mermaid" of their favorite "s'posing" had risen to take passage in the *Bounding Billow*, instead of the lovely lady in the white gown whom they had carefully settled with book and cushions and umbrella, ten minutes ago.

Of course they must needs "go too" — they were not to be left out of anything that mamma

was in! The *Bounding Billow* put back to port for two more passengers, and the bath was quite forgotten.

They took her all around the bay, to all their haunts, showed her the cave and the Castle, and all the wonders of the water-telescope; and if mamma did not find the excursion so perfectly delightful as they did, nobody could have suspected it. There are several different ways of being brave — and one of them is to laugh and look pleased and pretty while your heart is in your mouth.

But after that first morning the children all begged for her company so often (for no pleasure was quite perfect in which mamma did not share) that she had plenty of opportunities to get used to the water; and at last she wrote Papa Merington she believed she had really conquered her nerves and learned to enjoy it — when the water was *perfectly* smooth.

So the happy days flew past — singly and in

flocks of seven — and soon the last great event of the summer was close at hand. A double event it was, — the birthday, and the going home.

No extra birthday had been added to the family by Marigold's coming; for as hers was really only a few weeks later than Mary's, the children's determination to be really-truly twins held good here also, and they shared their birthday as they did everything else they possessed.

There would be no party this year, but papa was coming down to help them celebrate, and then right afterward to take them back to South Berket, where all the improvements and additions were awaiting mamma's inspection.

He came the night before the birthday, and coming by a different route he arrived an hour earlier than he was expected, and walked out through the dark drawing-room window into the moonlit veranda fronting the sea, into the midst of a surprised and happy family.

When the tumult of welcome subsided a little, and he could make himself heard, he was found to be in the middle of a sentence — "so as I couldn't stay to go up with you myself, I have brought a deputy."

"What does deputy mean?" asked Marigold, always alert for new information; but for once the gray eyes had been quicker than the brown eyes, and "Deputy means Dick!" cried Mary joyfully, as she dived into the dark window and pulled out a second visitor from the shadow of the curtains.

Dick Saunders surely had no reason to doubt the warmth of his welcome! It was like coming home, to the lonely young fellow, — and it was some minutes more before papa got a chance to finish his interrupted explanation.

It then appeared that another of his flying trips to New York had become necessary, and that he could be with them only for the

birthday, — so Dick was to remain in his stead, to escort them back to Berket.

The news was bitter-sweet, and the children hardly knew whether they were more sorry to lose papa or glad to have "their soldier" take them home.

But at any rate, and for both these reasons, they must make the most of the birthday, — and they did! They packed more different kinds of good times into that one day than you would have supposed one day would hold; and when at nightfall papa left them, he declared that he must go away to some nice, quiet place, like New York, to rest!

Both the twins had plenty of pretty gifts, of course, from every one in the house; but the one which surprised and pleased Marigold most of all was her present from Rodney — the prettiest little pair of slippers that ever were, with big shining silver buckles atop.

Into the toe of one was tucked a slip of paper

with nothing on it but a date, — the date of that day in June when Marigold had spoiled her shoes in "catching the painter,"— the first day when they had begun to be real chums.

CHAPTER XVII.

At the end of the festival day, when papa had gone, and every one was a little tired and quiet, Rod, sitting alone on the steps, saw a girl's figure coming up the drive.

It was a good while since he had seen Jennie Starrett, and at first he did not recognize her. This was not the boisterous, slatternly girl he had seen playing about the boats with the Cove boys; it was a neatly dressed and womanly little person who carried herself very straight, and looked somewhat as Mary Murray had looked a year ago.

There was a good reason for the resemblance. Jennie Starrett's highest ideal and ambition was to look like Marigold — to walk as she did, to speak like her. Such enthusiastic and admir-

ing imitation could not fail to show visible results.

Jennie looked a little disconcerted when she saw Rod on the steps. She did not feel acquainted with "the boy at the Meringtons'," and was rather shy of him.

She would have retreated when she found that the girls were not about; but Rod saw her disappointment in her face and made her sit down on the steps to wait, assuring her that the others would be back in a few minutes.

At first they were both a trifle stiff, till, by way of making conversation, Jennie announced, abruptly: "I got something for Marigold," and, on being politely urged to show it, fumbled in her pocket and dragged out her moist and sprangling offering — a six-rayed starfish.

"She likes 'em, you know," she explained. "She puts all the queer things she can get in a box to carry home; so I give her all I find."

As she spoke of Marigold, Jennie's rather dull

face brightened so that Marigold's own bright spirit seemed to be reflected in it. It was easy to see what subject would put her at her ease, and Rod began to talk about Marigold.

He was right: Jennie forgot her shyness and was ready and willing to talk. She grew eager and confidential, and in the ten minutes that passed before Mary and Marigold appeared Rodney obtained an insight into not only Jennie's feeling but also some points of Marigold's character, which surprised him.

He had known, and even joked, about Jennie's admiration, but he had not known what its influence on Jennie herself had been. But he now began to see that the change (almost a transformation) in the girl — in her appearance and manners, and even speech — had begun on that morning when he had lain in the sun up on the shore-path wondering impatiently what Marigold was up to, staying so long at the Cove.

"I never saw anybody like her before —

never!" Jennie said, with a quiver in her earnest voice. "She's so sort of friendly, and — and folksy, for all she's so handsome and smart. I'd give anything to be like Marigold!

"I never saw any summer-folks before that I cared anything about; but since that day she played keep house with us, Beulah and me we just pretend she's there, and do the dishes the way she did. You ought to see how we keep that table washed — and Beulah gets mad if I take her turn. It is lot's nicer, just as Marigold said, to have things decent. Last time she was to our house —"

"When was that?" asked Rod, deeply interested.

"One day last week. She's been lots of times, but that time we played was the longest time she ever stayed. But you know she's awful fond of babies, and" —

"Yes, I know!" Rod murmured.

And he had supposed he knew all about

Marigold! Rod whistled under his breath; and for a minute he lost the thread of Jennie's story.

Steady as well as impulsive — faithful as well as generous. Well, wasn't she just the right kind of girl, all round?

He remembered her wistful face when she asked him, "Don't you think they might keep it up, if they found it was fun?" and he realized now that there had been intention and resolution in it, besides the wistfulness. Her impulse of helpfulness had been sudden, but it was not merely the morning's whim.

Well, you never do know all about girls, that's a fact.

He wondered a little that she had said nothing about this little missionary work of hers. It didn't seem like Marigold to be reserved. But that was a little mistake on his part, — Marigold had not been reserved; mamma and Mary knew all about the Starretts. It was only he that had taken no interest, and so paid no attention.

At last he woke up to attend to what Jennie was saying; and for the few more minutes they were alone he did his best to entertain her. It was not difficult now.

Then there came a sudden race of light little feet along the veranda, and his responsibility was ended. Mary and Marigold had come.

That night they sat again on the seaward veranda, facing the moonlit sea. It seemed a little lonesome without papa, after so short a visit; but it was so nice to have Dick!

Rod sat balancing himself on the balustrade, and contemplating the group in the big splint rocking-chair opposite.

Mary 'n' Mary were perched one on either arm of the chair, each with an arm around Dick's neck, to keep her balance, both talking fast, and usually together, across him; while Dick, between the long black curls and the tumbled mop of brown, was in almost total eclipse, and had little to say beyond laughing at them both.

It was the same sort of thing that had irritated Rodney on Dick's previous visit, — the eager chattering and flutter of demonstrative affection, and "fuss about nothing" generally, — but this time it did not seem to annoy him.

There was no room for jealousy now, — he was not left out. His plans and interests and pleasures were the same as theirs, and when he chose to take part, there was plenty of room for him in the conversation, if not in the rocking-chair.

Best of all, Rod was not only on good terms now with all the others but with *himself* as well. That made all the difference.

On his side, Dick, quietly "sizing up" Rod for the second time, was reaching quite a different conclusion from his former one, and not knowing what a real difference there was in Rod, was inclined to blame his own first judgment as too severe.

"Must have been something wrong that other

time," he thought, observing the unconscious Rod from behind his screen of curls. "He seems a nice enough sort of youngster, after all." And his manner to Rod, as they talked, had a pleasant, man-to-man equality and friendliness in it that won the younger boy's heart for good and all.

Next day there was an end to play and leisure, for the packing began, and everybody was in a whirl of busyness.

Mamma, with her corps of skilful and willing assistants, dismantled the house, and oversaw the packing. Dick, quick to see and eager to help, lent a hand wherever needed; while the children, wild with the bustle and excitement, helped and hindered in about equal degrees.

When on the last afternoon they thoughtfully asked if they could be spared to take a last walk around the shore-path, mamma consented with suspicious alacrity, and assured them that she could get along for an hour *perfectly* well!

It was a pilgrimage to all their favorite places. Last of all the little girls said good-by to the Anemone Pool, while Rodney climbed to his eyrie on the cliff.

It was then he discovered the lost story-book, and climbed down the precipice to recover it with an amount of difficulty and hazard which amazed him, remembering his headlong descent on the day when the fog came in!

He smoothed out the crumpled leaves as well as he could, and carried it home. The little girls were interested and inquisitive, but they could get very little satisfaction out of him.

How did it come there? He dropped it. When? Last summer, sometime. What good was it now? What did he want to keep it for? Oh, he thought it might be useful to look at, once in awhile, — help him to remember something. Remember what? Never you mind.

So they gave it up, told him cheerfully that he was horrid, raced him to the gate-post, and

lost by only a yard, and trooped in, breathless but affable, to tell mamma they were *so* sorry they had been gone so long, and now they would help her "like anything."

And so they did.

On the long day's journey home to Berket it was nicer still to have Dick there.

He saw to tickets and trunk-checks, took charge of hand luggage and "counted noses" at all the changes, and when the little folk grew tired of all other amusements he told them stories, and kept them so happily interested they quite forgot where they were, and came back to their surroundings with astonishment when "Berket" was shouted, and it was time to put on hats and coats, and gather up bags and umbrellas, ready for arrival.

"What a comfort it is," said mamma, smiling at Dick, "to travel with a military escort. Thanks to 'our soldier' the journey has posi-

tively rested, instead of tiring us all out, as I expected."

Wasn't that reward enough to Dick, for having a good time himself?

They reached home only in time to go to bed, and in the morning there were so many things to see and to do that Marigold's impatience to visit her old home in McGowan's Lane was fairly forgotten in the confusion of interests.

First and foremost, there were the alterations to inspect, and the workmen to watch. Is there anything so fascinating as to watch a carpenter at work, — especially when it is your own house, yes, your own little room, that is being so magically transformed?

It was so absorbing that unpacking and getting settled were very uninteresting details in comparison, and that first morning the twins neither helped nor bothered to any great extent.

In fact, they could not "get settled," very

well, for Mary's own little blue chamber was one of the places that had been torn out and ripped to pieces, in order to remodel it into a lovely, long, double "twin-room" for Mary 'n' Mary, where the two little white beds should stand side by side in the middle, while at either end the little girls would have, practically, each her own room.

There were spaces carefully planned for two little bureaus, two little desks (their Christmas present from papa), and for the flowers and all the hundred little things girls like to have in their room, and it opened, as before, into mamma's dressing-room, so they would not miss the little mother-flittings in the night, which are like the visits of the guardian angels, and which we never outgrow, though sometimes we lose them by and by.

All this was so extremely interesting that the new guest-rooms and staircases and bathrooms which also claimed the attention of mamma and

the architect and carpenters, seemed matters of far less importance to Mary and Marigold.

They hovered about the workmen all the morning, and it was not until after luncheon that the "treasures" got themselves unpacked, and the enthusiasm for their bestowal filled Marigold's mind again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

She started off with the precious basket on her arm; and as she turned to wave good-bys to mamma and Mary she already began to feel like Mary Murray, it was so like old times.

The same old roadside path to the bossy's tree, which her little bare feet had followed so often — the stony, deep-rutted lane, down past Mr. McGowan's barns and sheds, — why, surely she *was* Mary Murray, and this wonderful year — the winter in the city, and the glorious seashore summer — was just one of the magnificent s'posings, in which, all her life, she had been wont to lose herself.

However, there was one change, — no little Mike stood waiting under the bossy's tree, to shake his head and wag his tail with joy at her

approach. Marigold looked at the tree half-sadly, and began to realize that a year is a very long time.

Nothing about the Murray house was altered. She lifted the sagging gate as of old, and dragged it open, scraping in the gravel. It was not often that the gate was closed; and Marigold reflected as she pulled that probably the Readys' pig was getting loose again.

She tiptoed under the parlor window, reconnoitred from the corner, and made a dash for the kitchen door.

Her long-planned surprise was a complete success!

At her sudden — not to say tumultuous — entrance, Mrs. Murray, who stood at the table ironing, turned with such a jump that her iron slid off its plate to the floor with a thump which jarred the house, and made a noble addition to the confusion of her welcome.

Two of the boys were there, besides Baby Joe,

in his high chair, and they all were quite as astonished to see her as Marigold could possibly have hoped.

Mrs. Murray returned her hug and kiss with motherly warmth, and then held her off and looked at her in affectionate admiration. "Well, you're getting to be a great girl, aren't you now?" she said, proudly; and the boys stared at her with wide eyes and dubious grins.

There was not much change in Marigold; her pretty clothes were very simple, and the cloud of curly bronze-brown hair could not possibly be prettier than it had always been; but she had been away so long they had got used to being without her, and now the rush of her ardent, impetuous spirit was like the sudden breeze that sets everything in the room to fluttering.

She hardly paused to say "Hello" to Tim and Johnny before she made her eager dash at the baby. But little Joe, who had stared like the others with open eyes, and mouth too, was

not prepared for the sudden onset. He first curled up like a caterpillar to evade her embrace, and when she persisted in hugging him he howled outright!

Alas and alas! to Baby Joe Marigold was a stranger! She had been away for nearly half his little life: no wonder he cried.

But it was a shock to her, and a grievous disappointment. Of all the household she had counted most on Baby Joe, and that he alone should turn against her — !

But Marigold — or Mary Murray — was "plucky" still. She would not have her welcome spoiled like this, and she set herself resolutely to work to make friends anew.

It did not take long to coax out a cherub-smile on the frowning, distrustful little face. If the Starrett baby had found her beguiling, even as a stranger, how much more Baby Joe, for whom her heart was brimful of love! In a few minutes he was gurgling, and showing his little

"SHE OPENED HER LITTLE BASKET."

teeth, and rumpling her hair with his fat fingers, quite as he used to do.

Then she opened her little basket, packed with such happy anticipations; and there, at least, was no disappointment. Marigold's lively imagination always stood her in good stead when choosing for others. She could *feel* just what each would like to have, — and so every one was suited as well as pleased.

After that pleasant business was finished, Marigold went out, her basket still half-full, to find her old companions, Maggie and Nellie and Katie and the rest.

They were not far to seek, and when the news of her return spread through the Lot the children gathered like a flock of sparrows.

They were glad to see her again, — she had always been a favorite and leader among them, — and they were delighted with the pretty and curious things she distributed among them, according to her long-cherished plans.

But it cannot be denied that they were a little awkward and shy of her, even her most familiar comrades; and the younger ones even put their fingers in their mouths — quite as if she were a Sunday-school teacher calling on mothers, on a week-day!

It was a compliment — it was even an honor! — but it was not comfortable to warm-hearted Marigold, who had thought to come right in again and be friends, as though there had been no break.

She struggled against the stiffness and tried to smother the sense of disappointment in her heart; and really there was no reasonable reason for it. The children were as pleased and excited by her coming as the little Starretts had been; and as it was, after all, just Mary Murray, and not a stranger, their shyness partly wore away as they followed her about and listened to her stories of the wonderful year.

They followed her when, last of all, she

went down to the end of the lane to find "Mike."

The Murrays' heifer was there, in the pasture with Mr. McGowan's cows. When Johnny and Tim had succeeded in separating her from the others and driving her up to the bars, the pretty young Jersey still took no interest in her visitor further than to coolly accept her handfuls of clover. When Marigold tried to pull her head up to kiss the curlycue in her forehead, she shook her head and pulled away, and went on feeding.

It was hard. Marigold had put it off to the last from a feeling that it would be so; and when, with a parting pat and a last bunch of clover-tops, she turned away, the ache in her throat made her feel that it would be well to say good-by to her old friends and get home to her new ones as soon as possible.

She ran in to kiss Mother Murray and Joe once more, said good-by all around, and hurried

up the lane alone. She would come again soon, she promised to their eager urging, but just now she only wanted to be "at home" — and McGowan's Lane was home no longer. Home was where mamma and Mary were!

It had been Mary's doing that Marigold had gone alone. Her sensitive feeling had suggested that the day belonged to Mary Murray, and she should have it all to herself without having to think of, or for, a companion who did not quite belong in it.

Mamma agreed with this theory when it was whispered in her ear; so Mary remained at home.

She had planned, however, to meet Marigold on the way back, impatient of even so short a separation from her twin. But someway Marigold returned a good deal sooner than they had expected; so when she came up the steps she found them all together there.

She gathered up her pluck and put on a brave

smile to meet them. She described her visit (the pleasant parts) and answered all their questions; but as soon as the general attention had turned elsewhere she took herself and her empty basket quietly out of sight.

As she went in Dick caught a glimpse of her face. It looked a little pale and tired, and there was no smile on it now.

After a minute or so he slipped away and followed her.

He found her on the little balcony at the end of the long parlors, standing by the balustrade and grasping it tightly with both her hands, while she gazed steadfastly out at the golden western sky; and, bending down to look into her face, he saw that her mouth was set firmly and her eyes were full.

Dick's arm went around her quick and close, like the good big brother he was.

"What's gone wrong, Marigolden?" he asked. "Weren't they glad to see you, down

there at Murray's?" and in his heart Dick was wroth with the whole Murray clan.

But Marigold nodded vigorously, and swallowed the lump in her throat as quickly as she could, still without taking her eyes from the sunset clouds, which dazzled and danced through the tear-drops.

"Oh, yes!" she said, slightly unsteadily, after a moment. "They were dear as they could be; but — but it *felt* so different! Of course I knew things would be *some* different, but I didn't know how it would make me feel.

"My bossy's all grown up — she's nothing but a cow now, — and she doesn't love me any more at all! And little Joe — he didn't *know* me, Dick! I kissed him and he cried!" and two big tears dripped off her lashes and splashed on the balustrade.

It was almost an unheard-of thing for Marigold to cry. Dick had never seen her, and for a moment he stared at the sunset himself in

perplexed dismay. Then he drew her a little closer and spoke gently, in a soothing tone, as though to a very little girl.

"After all, you know, there aren't many people who have two homes." He paused a moment, and added in a still lower tone: "Some people don't have any."

It was the right note to strike. She turned at once and slipped both arms tightly around his neck. "I know, Dick, — I know," she whispered.

Presently he began again. "A little girl with such a home as this — " but Marigold interrupted in a much steadier voice than before. The two big tears were all she had permitted herself.

"Oh, yes, Dick, I do love it," she said, earnestly. "I love this home the best, because they love *me* best. But I can't help loving the old one, too, a little, can I? It was home first, you know, though it doesn't seem so any more."

"Bless your heart, of course you can't!" he answered, heartily. "If you could help it you wouldn't be Marigold. But don't you fret, dear; it will be all right next time, when they get used to you again. And if Mr. Joe doesn't behave pretty then, we'll trounce him!" at which novel method of pacifying a baby Marigold laughed, and with a long, deep breath threw off her burden of depression.

Then they went in to dinner — to the warm, bright lamps, and the dear home-faces, and the happy, pleasant talk.

Dick watched Marigold as her eyes turned from mamma to Mary, and back again to mamma, her face growing brighter and braver with each minute that passed.

When she threw back her head and laughed at Rod's teasing, Dick laughed too (as they all did) and turned his attention to his dinner. Marigold was herself again.

After such a busy, eventful day the children

were glad to go to bed a little early, and when mamma went up "to tuck them in," Rodney and Dick were left alone together.

After a little casual talk, — "What was the matter with Marigold?" Rod asked, suddenly.

Oh, — so he had noticed, too?

Then probably mamma had also — that was why the "tucking in" seemed to be taking so long to-night. Mothers always notice.

Dick mused on this point for a moment, with a little smile, before he answered Rod's question.

Then he explained briefly why the home-coming had not been all happiness, and how bravely the little girl had tried to make the best of it.

"She's such a plucky little thing," he ended, affectionately; and presently added in the same affectionate, musing tone: "I'd like to choke that Murray kid!"

Rod chuckled silently, but he answered, seriously enough:

"Yes, Marigold's clear grit, — and she's an all-round nice girl, too! She's bright, and quick as lightning, — she isn't afraid of anything, — and she's the friendliest little soul that ever lived.

"More'n that, I know two people she's done a lot of good, this summer. She sort of likes everybody, you know, and *wants* to do things for 'em — like bringing home all that stuff for the children." And then he told about Jennie Starrett and her dishes.

Dick smiled approvingly. The story sounded just like Marigold. "And who's the other one?" he asked. "You said two."

"Well — the other one was me," Rod admitted, rather sheepishly, getting red. "I got myself into a regular fool scrape this summer, and it was Marigold that straightened me out. Not by *doing* anything very wonderful, you know, but just *being* the kind of girl she is, — being Marigold. She behaved — well, like

a gentleman. I didn't," and he laughed ruefully.

"I see," said Dick, gravely. He respected Rodney's reserve, and asked no more questions, but sat silent for awhile, thoughtfully tapping the arms of his chair.

"I guess," he said at last, slowly, "you might as well make it three. I fancy that little pair have done as much for me as any one.

"I don't claim to be a reformed character, precisely, — I was doing my best before that to make a man of myself, — but I don't know that it had ever occurred to me to be a gentleman until after one rainy day when I happened to meet Mary 'n' Mary in the woods."

"All right," assented Rod. "Count you in, makes it three. Three's the proper number, of course."

"There was one other little thing," Dick went on, in a meditative tone, as though half-forget-

ting he had a listener. "I don't think — I have smoked a cigar — since the first day those children kissed me."

"Oh, yes!" Rod rejoined, in a very careless, offhand sort of way; "*I* gave up smoking quite awhile ago. No use in it, anyway."

Dick did not smile.

"Then, counting you, and Jennie, and me," Rod summed up, "there are three reformations to her credit already. Pretty fair record, I call it, for her first year's work. If she is going to keep it up at the same rate, Marigold will be a good thing to have in the family!"

THE END.

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